

THE
RECLUSE:
OR,
HISTORY
OF
LADY GERTRUDE LESBY.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

DEDICATED (BY PERMISSION)

TO HER GRACE

THE DUCHESS OF RUTLAND.

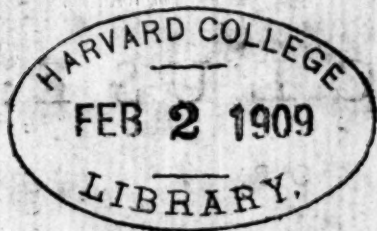
By Miss ESTHER FINGLASS.

V O L. I.

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TO HER GRACE

THE DUCHESS OF RUTLAND

May it please your Grace,

I AM aware of the public prejudice against dedicators and dedications, which are considered as so many frontispieces, artfully designed to captivate the reader, or to solicit the protection of some great personage of acknowledged taste and judgment, by informing them, that they possess such virtues, or abilities, as particularly qualify them to judge of the work.

It

It is cruel to term an appeal of this nature flattery; and no less presumptuous to chuse a patroness, without assigning a reason.

My chief object in this undertaking is the inculcation of virtue, for the promotion of which, I have not so immediately had recourse to nature for a model, as to experience and fancy, for finished characters; in which plan, if I have erred, I can only plead the practice of a certain limner, who, having generally miscarried in imitative attempts, had recourse

course to imagination and professional skill; and when he had finished a portrait, looked out for its likeness amongst the living beauties of the circle.

I do not presume to rank myself with delineators of any class; but having, by the help of imagination and a well directed zeal, produced a figure, such as nature should be, maternal fondness led me to wish its existence. I therefore humbly seek in your grace's protection, that Promethean spark, by which alone it can be animated.

animated. But if I dare flatter myself, that your grace would tacitly admit a semblance with my heroine in any striking feature, I should not despair of its immortality. I have the honour to be,

Your grace's most obedient,

Humble servant,

The AUTHOR..

REMARKS

On the following Work,

BY

A GENTLEMAN OF EMINENCE IN
THE LITERARY WORLD.

MADAM,

I HAVE perused your
Manuscript with attention and pleasure; and, according to your desire,
send you my candid opinion of it.

The Story is interesting and well
imagined.

The Incidents pleasing and natural.

The Diction easy, and even elegant.

On

On the whole, I think this work far superior to the general run of Novels, and that it merits a place among our best written pieces of fancy.

Wishing it all possible success in the publication, I remain

Your sincere friend,

R. LEWES.

THE
RECLUSE;
OR
HISTORY
OF
LADY GERTRUDE LESBY.

LETTER I.

SIR CHARLES MIDDLETON TO FRANCIS
MORDAUNT, ESQ.

'T WAS devilish unlucky, Frank, that you did not inform me two days sooner of your intention of coming to London; I should certainly in such case have postponed my journey hither, but being here, my presence is indispensable. I see you stare at this

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assertion;

assertion; and as I know you have an immoderate share of curiosity, I will even gratify it by sending you the particulars of a story, on which I ground my resolution of continuing here. Some time ago my servant James received a letter from his wife, who attends on Lady Gertrude; amongst other things, she informs him, they have lately acquired an addition to their family. A post-chaise drove to the door, in which were two ladies, who, enquiring for Lady Gertrude, were shewn into the parlour. Her ladyship was at this time in her dressing room, and when the servant delivered her the message, she appeared in great agitation, and desired Moran to leave her: soon after she was heard going down stairs.

The

The chaise waited near two hours, when the eldest of the ladies set off in it, the other remained with Lady Gertrude. They seemed perfectly pleased with each other for several days. But one day, after dinner, Moran met Miss Julia (the young lady mentioned), whom she described to be the finest creature she ever saw, going up stairs weeping; and she has never made her appearance since. Her lady too seems buried in the deepest melancholy; she thinks all this very extraordinary, but adds, "Whilst we hold good places, it is not for us to inspect into the behaviour of our betters, be it ever so mysterious". When James had read the letter, he began, by way of preface, to apologise for the liberty his wife

had taken in speaking of the transactions of the family. I was astonished at the fellow's preamble, and desired him to speak intelligibly. He laid the letter on the table, and retired. I hastily snatched up this letter, opened it, and read the foregoing particulars, which, as you may imagine, amazed me not a little. The young lady being described so beautiful, raised my curiosity; and Lady Gertrude's melancholy I knew not how to account for. As I had not seen her ladyship for a long time, I resolved to pay her a visit, and accordingly set off for Abbyville next morning, and arrived there at three o'clock the following day. I was received by Lady Gertrude, with visible marks of surprise: her salutation was,

was—Bless me, Sir Charles, this is a most unthought of visit!—I hope I am not less welcome for coming unexpectedly, my lady.—I shall not be surpris'd to hear of a prodigy, answered she; for what, but a total revolution in the state of things, could drive you so many miles from the metropolis at this gay season, to the habitation of your wife?—Your ladyship does yourself injustice, replied I, if you imagine any thing but the desire of seeing you, after so long an absence, brought me hither: believe me, there is no dearth of amusements in London; it is at present in full possession of all those charms you used to admire it for. This speech delivered in a friendly accent, had the desired effect. Her face, by

degrees, cleared from the gloom which overspread it on my first entrance. Dinner was served, and by the time it was over she appeared in perfect good humour. Tho' I bridled my impatience, I own I felt some at the fair cause of my journey not appearing at dinner; I feared she was removed, but judging it would be bad policy to ask any questions, I resolved to wait a few days, to try what chance would do towards gratifying my curiosity. Lady Gertrude dispatched a card to a neighbouring family, with a request, that if they were disengaged, they would favour her with their company to tea. I walked into the garden, and could have amused myself with admiring the various beauties it afforded, were
not

not my mind otherwise employed. I examined every window in view, but to no effect; I could not get a glance of what I so much desired to see. I continued walking near two hours, and then returned to the house. On my entrance I was introduced to two, Mr. Darcy's father and son. The former, I found by his conversation, during the course of the evening, to be a man of sense and learning; the son is a very fine young fellow, about twenty, and tho' he does not want sense, has a great dash of the coxcomb in his manner.

The ladies arrived soon after accompanied by a Mr. Brownlow, an admirer of one of the Miss Darcys. There are three of them, all fine women,

women, particularly the second, whose aspect is languishingly sweet, and whose finely arched brow is clouded with a melancholy, which renders her appearance extremely interesting; her whole air and deportment is, indeed, highly engaging, and her intellectual accomplishments are such, that they captivate the heart, before it can guard against their force. The other two, tho' very pleasing in their manner, fell infinitely short of their charming sister. The eldest, I perceive, is an intolerable coquette, by her manner of treating Brownlow. I imagined they had quarrelled before they came out, for she paid not the least attention to his assiduities the whole evening. The gentlemen engaged me to go on a shooting

shooting party next morning ; but it is needless to give you a detail. In short, I passed three weeks without being nearer the point I wished to attain, than I was the first moment of my arrival. I grew weary at last of a constant repetition of the same scene, and resolved on leaving the country in a few days. In the interval Lady Gertrude and I were invited to dine at Sir John Blake's, whose seat is near two miles distant from Abbyville. This was a favourable opportunity ; I thought if I could get her ladyship to go before me, it might be a means of gratifying my curiosity. Finding that impossible, I requested she would dress early, as I wished to see Sir John's demesnes before dinner. She complied with my

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request,

request, and the chariot drove to the door at three o'clock. When we were about half a mile distant from the house, I seemed to recollect something, and putting my head out of the carriage, called Thomas.—James rode up.—It is Thomas I want.—He is not here, please your honour, he desired Robert to ride in his stead; he said he had letters to leave at the post-office. I turned to my lady, and told her I must alight; that I forgot to seal one of the letters, and as it was on business of consequence, it must be forwarded that night. I accordingly stepped out, and taking Robert's horse, desired him to follow. When I arrived, I tied my horse to the outward gate, and entered the house unperceived, I walked

walked softly up stairs, and judging that if the young lady were in the house, it was not on the same floor of my apartments, I ascended a story higher, and listened at every door, but found all silent as death; I then turned to go down stairs, imagining the bird was flown, when I heard a deep sigh; I turned the bolt of the door, and walked into the middle of the room, but could perceive no person. I stood a moment; it must have proceeded from some other apartment, thought I, and was proceeding towards the door, when I heard another sigh, accompanied by an exclamation of—My God! teach me to submit patiently to thy will! I turned round, for the voice came from behind, when a young lady advanced from
a closet

a closet I had not before thought of. Her eyes were bent on the ground, but quickly raising them, and seeing me, she screamed, and reeled toward the window, as if near fainting. I flew to support her, and intreated her pardon for interrupting her, but assured her I did not mean to surprise her.

—Were you sent hither by Lady Gertrude, sir?—I was not, madam; she is not in the house, and is ignorant of my knowledge of your being here; I came to offer you my assistance: if you are detained here against your will, I'll endeavour to effect your escape, you may safely trust me, I am a man of honour.—I believe you, sir, said she, but you can be of no service to me, I want not to escape. Alas! whither

whither should I go? I have no friend nor refuge in the world; those from whom I should expect tendernefs are as unfeeling as rocks, and act as the worst of enemies: but, continued she, raising her eyes, which were swimming in tears, blessed be the hand that afflicts me. I was greatly affected by her grief. Be composed, dear madam, said I, and let me know how it will be in my power to serve you.—By never letting any knowledge of me escape from your lips, replied she; if you do, you will heap heavier afflictions on me than I already suffer.—You may command my silence, madam, answered I; but I shall be exceedingly unhappy at being deprived of the pleasure of alleviating some part of your uneasiness. If Lady Gertrude

trude can be of any service to you, I will endeavour to prevail on her to exert her influence in your behalf, over those friends you are alienated from. She made no answer but by her tears. Perhaps you have been misrepresented to her, said I; if you will not let me into the cause of your distress, write to her.—It is an additional aggravation of my distress, sir, said she, interrupting me, to see you so much concerned about a wretch whose woes will admit of no alleviation.—I am truly sorry, madam, I can be of no service to you.—I thank you sincerely, sir, and heaven will surely reward you for your humanity; but on my knees I entreat, you will never attempt seeing me again. As you are a visiter here, pity might induce

duce you to see me, which, if discovered, would be my utter ruin.— I promise you, madam, said I, not to make any attempt to see you against your inclination ; and must also inform you that I am not a visiter, but the master of this house, which I should be happy in rendering agreeable to you, if you would permit me. She looked earnestly in my face while I pronounced these words. I thought I saw horror rise in her countenance ; she covered her face with her hands, as if to hide me from her sight, and exclaimed, Oh ! leave me, leave me ! I depend on your promise. She then went into her closet, and bolted it on the inside.

I was

I was struck with amazement at the oddity of her behaviour, and it was some time before I recovered from the surprise which her last action threw me into. I went down stairs, and finding Robert waiting, gave him a letter which I had reserved for that purpose, ordering him to leave it at the office, and then set off for Sir John's. I arrived some time before dinner. There was a large party, amongst whom were the Darcy's: all the young people were in high spirits. As I was not in a humour to partake of their mirth, I attached myself the whole evening to Emily, who was the most rational being in the group, and honoured me with more of her conversation that evening than she had ever done before, and convinced
me

me that her mind was as amiable as her outside was fair. It was late when we broke up; and Lady Gertrude and I did not exchange a word during our ride homewards; we met not until dinner next day. I had been walking all the morning, and musing on the last night's adventure. That the young lady was in the power of Lady Gertrude I could plainly perceive; but how it happened that she was so, I could by no means make out, her ladyship never having troubled me with any of her private, or family transactions; but there was *something* in this affair which I thought I should be made acquainted with; but the promise I had given the young lady prevented me from making enquiries. After dinner, Lady Gertrude observing I kept

kept silence, said she feared I had lost my heart since my arrival at Abbyville. I have observed, continued she, your extreme absence of mind lately.—Love is not the cause of my mental absence, my lady.—I did not imagine any thing could affect the spirits of a fine gentleman, answered she, with a satirical smile, but the soft passion.—There are many things that can affect the spirits of a man of feeling, I observed: compassion for the misery of others; for the fate of such persons as undeservedly suffer by the wrong judgment or caprice of those who have it in their power to insure their happiness or misery. She changed colour at this remark, but presently answered, Solitude don't agree with you, Sir Charles; it has spread

spread a gloom over your mind, and every foolish tale of distress you hear, is magnified by your reflections; I suppose Emely Darcy has made you her confidant, and enlarged on the cruelty of her parents, who will not consent to her marrying a fellow whom nobody knows, and is at best but an *adventurer*.—

You are wrong in your conjecture, madam; Miss Emily has not done me the honour you imagine; and I have too great an opinion of her prudence, to think she would arraign the conduct of her parents, in an affair which shews how highly they estimate her merit. She made no answer to this, and seemed by her manner not to give attention to me. I went up to my study, and continuing there some time, came
down

down in a worse humour than I had been in for many months. On my entering the parlour, I met Moran coming out in some *confusion*, and observed that my lady had been in a great rage by the *inflammation* in her countenance. She traversed the room in great disorder: I would have renewed the conversation we had dropped, but seeing her so extremely agitated, judged it would be a wrong time, as I doubted not that what I had already said had produced the effects. I was a witness to. I took up a book that lay in the window, and amused myself with it until tea was ready. My lady was by this time more composed, and strove to appear more so than she really was. I pitied her, I knew not why, and forbore.

bore to say any thing that might cause her uneasiness. She retired early, complaining of a violent headache. She continued indisposed next day, but kept writing all the morning; towards evening she grew so extremely ill, that I sent for a physician. On his arrival he pronounced her in a high fever, and expressed some fear for her life. In her raving fits she would call incessantly on my name, and charge me to do justice to Julia.

LET-

LETTER II.

IN CONTINUATION.

ON the thirteenth day of her illness, Lady Gertrude recovered her senses, and asked how long she had been ill, and if I were still in the house. On being told I was, she desired to speak with me. I immediately obeyed the summons, and went to her bedside; she waved her hands for her attendants to retire. When we were alone—I have requested your company, Sir Charles, to thank you for the attention you paid me during my illness; an attention I by no means deserved. I often saw you in the room, during

ing the first four days, with a compassion in your countenance I had no reason to expect from you; what has passed since I know not. Perhaps you are already acquainted with the principal thing which this paper contains (taking a sealed packet from her pillow). You'll pity the wretch whom you must despise, when you have perused it, which must not be till I shall be released from this world of misery, and gone to that unchangable state, that just tribunal, where I must account for my innumerable offences. I charge you fulfil the request I make in this paper, and may no action of your life subject you to the excruciating pangs of a guilty conscience.

Here

Here she ceased speaking, and held out the paper. I took it, and assured her there was no request of hers within my power that I would not fully comply with ; requested she would compose herself, and as her disorder had taken a favourable turn, she might live to atone for those offences that dwelt so strong on her mind. In answer to me she observed, that she well knew it would be impossible she could long survive ; that she had been borne down with afflictions for some time ; that my arrival at Abbyville had made her partake of amusements that were foreign to her heart ; but she strove to keep up the appearance of content, whilst her soul was wrecked with anguish. The tide has at last overwhelmed me,

me, continued she, and I resign myself to the all-just and all-merciful being, who disposes of us as he sees best. She then said she would endeavour to get a little rest, as she had a conflict to go thro' she had not spirits then to support. On this I retired, and must here cease from writing more, it being near two o'clock in the morning; in my next I will give you some farther particulars; till then, adieu.

LETTER III:

IN CONTINUATION.

IN about two hours after, as I sat musing on what had passed, I heard a voilent scream, and flew to the place from whence it proceeded, which was Lady Gertrude's apartment, and found her attendants *endeavouring* to recover Julia from a fainting fit. It was not long before they succeeded; but soon after I entered, on seeing me, she closed her eyes again. Finding my presence was disagreeable, I turned to leave the room, when Lady Gertrude, who was sitting up, supported by pillows, called to me.—Do not go, Sir Charles, said she, this
is

is the young lady. I solicited your protection for. Come hither, Julia, look not so distantly on Sir Charles; he never injured you intentionally; it is I only you have to blame for your unmerited sufferings; put confidence in him, he will not prove unworthy of it. The young lady made no *answer* but by her tears.—

Do not imbitter my last moments, my dear Julia, by this excess of affliction; you can feel no loss of me, as I never acted in the capacity I should have done by you. By my will I have left you the free disposal of a large fortune, as the only compensation in my power, for my past conduct towards you; I hope it will be in some part the means of procuring you happiness.

—Oh! madam, said Julia, rising and

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throwing

throwing herself on her knees by the bedside, do not speak to me of sufferings, I never was unhappy; this I account the bitterest moment of my life; all other misfortunes were ideal compared to this severe one of losing you at the very moment I found you every thing that was amiable—the tenderest, the best of friends: it is too much to support, (letting her head fall on the bed, and giving free vent to her tears and sobs, which almost rent her bosom).—I thank thee, my God, exclaimed Lady Gertrude, raising her hands, it is fit I should bear the full weight. Julia arose, and drying her eyes with her handkerchief.—Pardon me, madam, for adding to the pangs you suffer; I will stifle this sorrow; permit me

to attend you while it pleases God to let you remain here; I will no more disturb you with this unavailing affliction. She then turned to me—Can you, sir, pardon the effects of a prejudice I had conceived against you? I am now convinced how unjustly.—No apology is necessary, dear madam; you must have cause to think of me to my disadvantage; as that is I hope removed, I shall be proud of your future good opinion. Lady Gertrude seemed pleased at what I said; she said she wished to get a little rest; I left the room, saying I would walk over to Mr. Darcy's, and hoped to find her better on my return.—Yes, I trust I shall be better shortly, answered she; God bless you. I went to Darcy's, but found no one

at home, except young Darcy and his eldest sister. They both rallied me most unmercifully on the dolefulness of my looks. Miss Darcy asked me, laughing, if her ladyship had laid restrictions on me not to marry again. This question would have been answered in a manner no way pleasing to the lady, had not the entrance of her mother and sister Emily put a stop to the conversation. They both enquired for Lady Gertrude; the latter made me some compliments on my humanity, for confining myself to a sick house. I said I did not deserve her encomiums; that it was what every man of feeling would do in my situation.—Oh, cried Miss Darcy, now you grow quite serious, and
con-

consequently quite stupid; but indeed Emily makes every one so with her dull remarks.—You wrong your sister, madam, said I; her remarks do equal justice to her head and heart.—O! certainly, for she praised you. Young Darcy, whose favorite Emily is, said softly, Hush! hush! Bell, don't be envious. She darted a look at him highly expressive of resentment, and flung out of the room. I took my leave soon after, and returned home. On my arrival at my own house, I enquired for Lady Gertrude, and was told she was asleep. I sent up my *compliments* to Miss Julia, requesting her company to dinner. She desired to be excused, as the doctor gave his opinion, that when her ladyship awoke, she

would not live half an hour, and she could not think of leaving her apartment until she performed the last sad office. Lady Gertrude slept near four hours, and on her awaking desired to see me. When I came into her room, Julia was supporting her in her arms.—I wished to see you once more, Sir Charles, said she, holding out her hand, which I took in mine ; you will be shortly released from an engagement, which must have been irksome to you ; I intreat your pardon for robbing you of those years of happiness you might have enjoyed with a more deserving woman ; but I trust it is not too late ; there are many years of joy and happiness before you, when I shall no more be remembered. I have no doubt
but

but the woman of your choice will be a worthy one ; and I make it a request, whenever that happens, that Julia may find a friend and protectress in her ; her own merit will ensure her regard when once known to her. For your part, my dear, turning to Julia, I desire you will be guided by Sir Charles ; I am confident he will interest *himself* in whatever is conducive to your happiness. Think on my faults without resentment ; and let my story be a warning to you not to let a false pride tyrannise over any noble or tender passion. I hope the bitter remorse I have long felt for my follies, has made my peace with heaven : I have an humble confidence in the Father of Mercy.

After these words, faintly ejaculated, she held up her hands for some time, and employed herself in silent prayer; then laying her head on the pillow, and faintly breathing a last sigh, she recommended her soul to her all-gracious Creator, and expired in peace.

LET-

LETTER IV.

IN CONTINUATION.

JULIA, whose spirits were weakened by the acuteness of her feelings, sunk at this sad moment into a fainting fit, and for some time appeared lifeless ; we tried all means to recover her, and at length succeeded. On her recovery, I prevailed on her to quit the dismal scene, and by degrees she recovered some composure, but requested I would permit her to pass the evening alone. I acquiesced, and she retired to her apartment.

The sad scene I had been witness to, not only affected, but perfectly

fectly grieved me ; for tho' the disparity of Lady Gertrude's and my years prevented me from entertaining a violent passion for her, I always held her in the highest esteem ; and she commanded all my gratitude, as I judged her sole motive for marrying me, was to prevent my being far more disagreeably matched, which would have been the case, had I married Lord L—'s daughter, the lady designed for me by my father, whose commands I dare not dispute on pain of being disinherited. A brief recital of the story may not be amiss, my dear Frank.

When I returned to England from the tour of Europe, it was with no other thought but being
destined

destined to perpetual misery with a woman I could not love. Had I five hundred a year at that time, I would not have hesitated a moment at rejecting her ; but situated as I was, you may guess I had no alternative. You can form no idea of my surprise at being told on my arrival, that I must prepare to visit Lady Gertrude Lesby, as she was the lady I was shortly to be united to. My heart bounded with joy at the mention of her name ; I asked my father, in amazement, if he was serious. He assured me he was, and that every matter relative to our intended union was agreed upon. I scarce believed myself awake, so overjoyed was I at this intelligence ; for tho' I had never seen Lady Gertrude, I had heard
some

some years before of her being a great beauty, possessed of a large fortune, and of her having refused some of the greatest matches in the kingdom. To be *distinguished* by her, flattered my vanity, and I certainly looked upon her as an angel of light, when compared to my former destined helpmate. I paid her ladyship a visit next day after my arrival. She was a fine woman, but some years older than I before imagined her to be. She received me with an air of dignity and politeness, and seemed perfectly at ease. I was, on the contrary, greatly embarrassed; I knew not how to address a woman on the subject of love very near old enough to be my mother. She, however, quickly released me from my embarrassment,

barrassment, by entering with much facility and force on different topics of conversation. In short, we were married soon afterwards; but during the performance of the ceremony, her ladyship underwent violent agitation: being, however, at that time mistress of her passions, she collected her spirits, and appeared the remainder of the day in perfect composure. At night when I retired, I was a good deal surpris'd at receiving a note, giving me to understand, that I must dispense with the company of my bride. I judg'd it to be some sudden caprice, and resolv'd to take no notice. In the morning I was met by a Miss Manly, an intimate friend of my lady's, who inform'd me, that her friend design'd to live with me on no other terms than

than our keeping separate apartments ; as she had no motive in marrying me, but to prevent a match which I had expressed the strongest repugnance to, she expected me to acquiesce in her proposal. I was going to remonstrate on this matter, but was told I had no business to expostulate, for my lady was determined. This message was delivered in so peremptory a manner, that it left no room for argument ; I therefore told Miss Manly, that as her ladyship had consulted my peace of mind by her late act, she should not find me ungrateful for the favour ; and tho' I could wish she had not taken so extraordinary a resolution, yet I would leave her perfect mistress

tricks of her own conduct relating to the present matter.

Her ladyship has kept her resolution these five years. During the first two we constantly resided in one house together ; at the end of that time she went down to Wales, and has lived either there or at Abbyville ever since. I lost no time, you may be sure, my dear Frank, in opening the packet ; the contents have a good deal surprised me ; I design in my next to transcribe them for your perusal. I would set off for town immediately, but for the ill state of health Julia is in ; she has had a severe trial, which has greatly affected her spirits, and I cannot think of leaving her while their lowness

lowness continues. Miss Manly, who lives in this neighbourhood, is also very ill with a nervous complaint, or I should not fear leaving Julia, as she is much in her favour, and would take every method to dispel her *melancholy*, did her health permit her. My taper warns me it is time to have done ; so good night.

C. MIDDLETON.

LETTER V.

IN CONTINUATION.

AS I judge of your impatience by what I should feel myself on a similar occasion, I hasten to gratify your curiosity. The task I have undertaken, I fear, I shall find tedious. You, who know the indolence of my temper, can form a judgment of my willingness to oblige you, if I transcribe so many sheets for your amusement; but I am trifling instead of informing. Take it then in her ladyship's own words.

THE

THE HISTORY OF LADY GERTRUDE
LESBY.

THE enclosed packet was designed only for the perusal of my daughter Julia; but I find it impossible to keep longer concealed what has been a continual source of misery to me. Your penetrating eye, Sir Charles, must have marked my confusion yesterday, but you know not what to attribute it to; you think me unjust to a young lady in this house, but you can form no idea to what a pitch I have carried that injustice. The consciousness of having acted wrong is no atonement; it is fit I should communicate at large my enormities to the several persons whom I am accountable

countable to for my actions. Sir Charles Middleton has a claim to my confidence, from the tie that unites us, and the uniform gentleness of his conduct towards me. Take then, sir, the particulars of a life, marked by error in one instance, and rendered miserable by a conduct the result of it.

LADY GERTRUDE'S NARRATIVE.

MY father, the late Earl of M——n, had eleven children, who all died in their infancy, except my brother, Lord Lesby, and myself. He was younger than I by two years. As there were but two spared out of so large a stock, and the earl being master of an immense fortune, we were gratified
in

in our *infancy* with every thing our hearts could form. We never experienced the smallest contradiction from our parents, and therefore would not brook with it from any other person. Lord Lesby was of a gentle, even disposition, and affable to every creature. He loved me exceedingly, and as I had the advantage in point of age, I was his monitor on every occasion; not the smallest matter would he transact without my approbation. As to myself, I was of a quite different cast, being haughty and reserved to my inferiors. This pride prevented me from having a very numerous acquaintance, and I may add, from acquiring many friends; for my equals were disgusted at the air of superiority I assumed

assumed over them, while those in the next rank were mortified at the neglect I publicly treated them with. There was one young lady with whom I was extremely intimate; I cannot say I had a friendship for her, as I envied her the rank she held above me, she being eldest daughter to the Duke of B——; however, we possessed each other's confidence. I was about eighteen, and my brother sixteen, when there was a gentleman *recommended* by the duke for my brother's tutor. Here my pride received a shock, on being told he must be treated, in every respect, as one of the family. I made all the objections my invention could furnish me with against this familiarity, but to no effect. My father

ther, who was willing to humour all my whims, promised to enquire *particularly* after his family ; if it was a good one, he should be admitted immediately ; if not, there must be another sought for. As it was absolutely necessary to have a person in that capacity, he *accordingly* enquired of the duke some particulars of his family, who informed him, that Mr. Hastings, the gentleman in question, was nephew to the present Lord Lessington ; that his mother had eloped with his father, a gentleman of good family, but small *fortune*, at a time when there was a treaty of marriage going forward between her and Lord George D——r. Her brother was so irritated against her for marrying against his inclination,

nation, that he would never give her any fortune, or be reconciled to her. She was therefore obliged to relinquish her family and noble prospects, and retire into the country with the husband of her choice.

LETTER VI.

IN COTINUATION.

FOR four years she never regretted the splendor she had quitted, she being completely happy, tho' not in affluence. At the end of that time, it pleased heaven to deprive her of a husband on whom her soul doated. The violence of her grief preyed upon her health, and in a short time proved fatal: she survived him but a few months, leaving an infant of three years old to the care of an uncle (a brother of her husband's) who was appointed guardian and sole executor of his fortune.

His

His uncle took him home, and as he grew up, spared no expence on his education. Masters of all kinds were employed, and by the time he attained his eighteenth year, he possessed every accomplishment requisite to a gentleman; all that was wanting to render him complete, was the taking the grand tour. His uncle, in short, devoted entirely to the cultivation of his mind, spent his whole income on his education, so that when he came to age he had nothing to receive. He had, indeed, some hopes from Lord Lessington, his mother's brother, and designed to wait on him, which he accordingly did, accompanied by his uncle Hastings. His lordship, on their being introduced, asked him

D 2 bluntly

bluntly his business. His uncle answered for him, that he came to solicit his affection, which, as a near relation, he had some claim to. His lordship, who had seemed to banish all kind of parental feelings, observed, that his sister, by allying herself to a beggar, had forfeited every claim to his affection and friendship, and he would never look on her offspring as in any degree related to him. The elder Mr. Hastings, on delivery of this speech, turned to his nephew, (who was almost deprived the power of utterance, such an effect had the foregoing discourse on him) "Come, Edmund," said he, "it is not amongst your noble relations you must seek friendship or independence; the specimen you
have

have now received of his lordship's benevolence, may teach you what to expect in future." Thus saying, he quitted the room, accompanied by his nephew, who had not spoke during the preceding conversation, but in going out, made his lordship a profound bow, accompanied with a look expressive of ineffable contempt. His hopes on his lordship were now entirely frustrated. As his income was insufficient to procure him the means of taking the tour, a measure he was determined on at all events, the impetuosity of youth despising the suggestions of prudence, he, aided by his uncle, who had more good nature than foresight, mortgaged his estate for five thousand pounds, and with this sum set out on his travels.

He continued abroad upwards of two years, and returned to England, not as our modern Jacky Bulls, who pick up the vices and follies of every nation they pass thro' and overlook their virtues and good qualities, but a complete finished gentleman.

LET.

LETTER VII.

IN CONTINUATION.

HE paid his duty to his uncle immediately on his arrival, who received him affectionately. During his stay with him, he became acquainted with a gentleman of large fortune, who promised to exert his interest to procure him a place under government. He spoke highly in his favour to the Duke of B— one day that his grace dined with him; who, after enquiring particularly into his story, gave him a pressing invitation to pass some time at his house, and assured

him he would procure him a lucrative employment in a short time.

He lived in his grace's family near a year, but no place became vacant, that his grace thought worthy his acceptance. His situation, from what cause I know not, at this time became disagreeable to him; he expressed a wish to the duke to become tutor to some young nobleman. His grace endeavoured to dissuade him from the resolution he had formed, as he meant to provide more advantageously for him; but finding him averse to the means proposed, and that he was determined to carry his own resolution into effect, he recommended him to my father

father in such advantageous terms, that he was immediately accepted.

These particulars I learned from the earl the day after I made the objections to him. The recital of them pleased me, for I had often heard Lady Frances praise the elegant Hastings, who, she said, outshone, both in intellectual and personal accomplishments, all the young men of fashion about town. Tho' these encomiums, by hearing them often repeated, were sufficient to raise my curiosity, I never felt the slightest desire to see him, as the want of rank and fortune threw, in my opinion, a shade over all his good qualities.

On the day appointed for his becoming preceptor to my bro-

ther, the duke's family was invited to dine with us. I felt unusually uneasy all that morning, and could by no means account for it. The time passed slowly until they arrived ; but when that moment approached, words would be too poor to convey to you an idea of my feelings, on the duke's advancing to my mother, leading a young gentleman of a more graceful and noble presence than can be conceived—" This, my lady, is Mr. Hastings, the gentleman who is to be honoured with the superintendency of Lord Lesby's education." My mother received them with a dignified address, and said — " I owe your grace many thanks for so valuable an acquisition ; for such I am sure this gentleman will prove."

prove." He returned her thanks for her good opinion, in the most easy, polite terms. The duke then led him to me—"Give me leave, Lady Gertrude, to introduce Mr. Hastings; you'll find him worthy your esteem." I bowed my head, but felt so confused, I was not able to articulate a syllable. My father and brother, who had often seen him before, but had forbore to say any thing in his favor, being willing he should make the first impressions himself to his advantage, came up and joined in conversation with him and the duke. For my part, I was rendered incapable of speaking by the surprise his presence threw me into, for he surpassed the most flattering idea I could form of him. I walked over
to

to the other side of the room, where I found my mother lavishing the most extravagant encomiums on him to the duchess and Lady Frances. I was still silent; but tho' I joined not in his praise, my heart secretly applauded every thing that was said in his favour.

LET-

LETTER VIII.

IN COTINUATION.

AFTER dinner, Lady Frances took me by the arm, and led me into the garden. When we had got a few paces from the house, she exclaimed, with a sigh—How blest will you be in the society of this charming fellow! my dear Gertrude; I cannot forbear envying you, for I feel I shall regret the loss of him most severely. I turned and looked full at her—Surely, said I, half laughing, you are not serious.—Too much so for my peace, answered she; tho' I had nothing to expect, had he even remained with us,

us, for he never paid me the slightest attention but what was consistent with cold politeness; but then I had him daily in view, and was constantly blest with his elegant conversation.—And you really love him?—Ah! take care that you do not also, Gertrude; it is almost impossible to behold him with indifference; would I had never seen him!—You need have no apprehensions for me, Lady Frances, replied I, somewhat piqued; I did not refuse so many men of rank and fortune, to reserve myself for one so very deficient in both these particulars.—Ah! forgive me, my dear, rejoined she hastily, (seeing I was hurt at the supposition of liking him) I scarce know what to say; but

but it is the hope, that you will not think so favourably of him as I do, encourages me to make this confession. I fear it is a discovery he has made of my sentiments in his favour, has made him so anxious to leave our house, for his soul is too noble to accept the hand of a woman on whom he could not place his affections. This thought mortifies me exceedingly ; for, indelicate as it may seem, nothing but the dread of a refusal prevents me from making him an offer of my hand and fortune.—I confess, replied I, the man seems every thing that is capable of inspiring the soft passion ; but supposing he returned your affection, could you hope for the duke's consent to such a preposterous

posterior union?—My father loves me, said she, and I believe would not withhold his consent, where the happiness of life is at stake, especially as the object is so worthy, and so particularly esteemed by him.—He might change his opinion of him, said I, on finding he had gained the affections of his daughter. His ideas of happiness are, I dare say, different from yours, and he will scarce think a few personal qualifications an equivalent for thirty thousand pounds.—Ah, cruel! she exclaimed, why will you raise more barriers in my imagination? the doubt of his affection is sufficient to drive me to distraction, without a thought of any other.—Well, well, said I, interrupting her, you seem determined

mined to be foolish, therefore I shall not attempt to reason with you.—But I must intreat your assistance, she replied. The footing of intimacy you'll live on with him, will give you an opportunity of enquiring into the state of his heart, a thing I could never do, from the consciousness of feeling too much concerned in the enquiry; tho' I fear, added she with a sigh, he has discovered symptoms enough to his advantage, and has not thought proper to avail himself of them.—Then you had better think no more of him, said I, since he seems so insensible of the honour you do him.—I can perceive, from the coolness of your reasoning, replied she, that you have never loved, therefore

fore can have no idea of the conflicts in my breast; even pride, our sex's best friend in such cases, cannot inspire me with sufficient courage to drive him from my heart. Hard as the task is, I would, however, instantly set about it, did I not hope, that his indifference proceeded from a principle of honour; and that he would not take advantage of the partiality of the daughter of his benefactor, for in that light he considers the duke. On this thought rests my only hope; but if once convinced of his indifference, or of his affections being placed on another, I would give him up for ever, and fix on whatever person my father thought proper for me. I was affected at
her

her manner of pronouncing this speech, and assured her, if I could possibly serve her, without seeming too much interested, she might depend on me; and that I would certainly think of some means to bring about this interesting enquiry. She embraced me, weeping—I know my dear Gertrude will be as tender of my fame as of her own; I need not bid you act with delicacy; your own prudence will dictate to you better than I can, blinded as I am with passion; but remember the information you can give, must form the happiness or misery of my future life.

We now returned to the company, my spirits being much lowered

ered by the conversation I had been engaged in. The duke, my father, and Hastings, were engaged in a conversation concerning the manners of different countries. As I was now less embarrassed than I had been at his first entrance, and he being differently engaged, it gave me an opportunity of examining him with attention, without seeming to do so. I perceived he possessed numberless perfections, amongst which the graces of speech were not the least. He delivered his remarks and opinion in such graceful, easy, unaffected terms, as charmed his hearers, and added to the esteem they had already conceived for him. The strong partiality Lady Frances entertained for him, now no longer surprised

surprised me ; every movement of his features, and turn of his voice, had something so inexpressibly engaging in it, as penetrated to the soul. It was with difficulty she hid her concern, as the time approached for them to take their leave (for we were to go into the country next day). I was fearful of her exposing herself, and strove to keep up her spirits ; she made her adieus, however, better than I expected, and relieved me exceedingly ; for, from the sample I had of her temper in the garden, I thought the parting must be dreadful to her.

LET-

LETTER IX:

IN CONTINUATION.

MR. Hastings rose every day in the esteem of all who had an opportunity of conversing with him; no tongue remained silent in his praise except mine. He treated me with a distant politeness and reserve, which stung my pride. Used as I was to compliments and flattery, from whatever men I conversed with, I could not brook, with patience, such stoical indifference from a person where attention would be far from disagreeable. At one time, I inclined to think it was want of sensibility; but the next moment brought to

to my memory some act of his, which convinced me he possessed a large share of it.

Some time passed over in this manner, when I recollected my promise to Lady Frances, and resolved to throw aside that haughtiness for which I was so distinguished, and treat him with the freedom of a brother, in order to come at this secret so interesting to my friend. I did not then imagine self was concerned, and presently put my resolution in practice. I would frequently interrupt my brother and him at their studies, insist on their accompanying me in a walk, on a visit, or other occasions. These civilities were always received by him with ap-

apparent satisfaction ; but still he kept up that intollerable reserve, which, by degrees, increased into a melancholy that was strikingly visible. I was much vexed to find all my endeavours to bring about an intimacy fruitless, and at a loss how to account for his melancholy, when it struck me that he loved Lady Frances, and that his absence from her produced this change in him. A suggestion of this nature roused my pride, or rather jealousy, for then it was I discovered I loved him, by the conflicting passions which alternately governed me ; but rage and disappointment were predominant. I considered Lady Frances as a favoured rival, and as such marked her as an object of vengeance. The
violent

violent emotions these thoughts occasioned, threw me into a fever, which confined me three weeks; it was indeed of the raging kind, but slow, and preyed gradually on my spirits.

At times I despised myself for my weakness, and resolved to drive Hastings from my thoughts. Vain resolution! impossible to perform—again busy fancy would represent Lady Frances as the beloved object that withheld his affections from me: my resentment would then devolve against her—ten thousand schemes would I form, to thwart their loves; but quit those schemes as soon as formed. Thus was my mind in continual warfare, and my corporeal frame partook of my

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mental uneasiness. My brother visited me three or four times every day — He often spoke of Hastings, and mentioned the sorrow he expressed for my illness. It was balm to my distracted mind to hear he expressed some concern for me, but it could not obliterate the idea of Lady Frances being the object of his love, and consequently of my envy and hatred; and I resolved whenever it was in my power, to give her proofs of my resentment.

I recovered but slowly, and had not as yet joined the family, when I received a letter from Lady Frances, filled with enquiries concerning Hastings, and lamenting that she could not conquer her passion for him. It was some consolation
to

to me to know she was as miserable as myself — “Thank heaven ! (I exclaimed) if he loves her she knows it not, nor ever shall, if I can prevent it.” I feigned myself better, as an excuse to go down ; for I longed with impatience to behold the youth who had wrought such a change in my nature as to make me unjust to my friend ; for before my mind became infected with that fatal passion, I did not imagine words could induce me to act the part I was determined to do. I went down to dinner, led by Lord Lesby, who was overjoyed at my recovery. We found only Mr. Hastings in the dining room (Lady M — not having done dressing). He flew to receive me, but stopped, as if conscious of acting wrong, and

advanced with a slow step ; then, taking my hand, looking tenderly in my face——Pardon, Lady Gertrude, said he, my first impulse. The joy of seeing you, after being so long deprived of that happiness, made me for a moment forget the respect that was due to you.——Pshaw, pshaw, cried I, vexed at the gravity he assumed in addressing me, lay aside this ridiculous ceremony ; I can't endure it from those I esteem my friends.—And may I flatter myself (cried he eagerly, his countenance brightening with joy) that I am so happy as to be considered in that light ?——Most assuredly, said I. Encouraged by this reply, precipitately delivered in a soft, but animating tone, he raised my hand, which he had not quitted,

quitted, to his lips—Lady Gertrude may be answered, rejoined he in the most melting tone, there is no person on earth more sincerely wishes her happiness than I, or is more proud of the appellation she has just honoured me with, which it shall be my principal study to deserve the continuance of.

I felt my face glow while he was speaking ; my hand trembled in his ; he perceived my agitation, but suspected not the cause, and leading me to a chair, begged my forgiveness, for letting me stand so long, as he saw I was still very weak. When I was seated, he quitted the room, and left me at liberty to collect my spirits, which were much fluttered by what he

said. In a few minutes he returned with Lady M——; she flew to embrace me—Thank heaven! you are restored to us, my dear child, said she; every brow was clouded by your illness; your father knew not of your intention of coming down to-day, or he would have put off his engagement. She used many more expressions of affection and maternal tenderness. I felt a purer pleasure the remainder of that day, than I had ever experienced before; I was sensible of the kindness of my parents and brother; and the probability of being dear to Hastings, diffused a joy over my heart it had long been a stranger to. How blest might my future life have been, had I continued in the same frame of mind! but

but returning health banished the delightful sensations I then experienced, and gave me up a prey to passions, perhaps too strong for reason to controul.

It being my first day of coming down, my mother intreated me to retire early. I could not refuse complying, tho' I never felt so strong an inclination for staying. My brother arose to conduct me to the door of my apartment. In paying my compliments, I met Hastings's eyes—they looked unutterable softness—I could not be mistaken, and my emotions of joy can be better imagined than described. I passed that night quite different from my former ones; reflecting with pleasure on the

transactions of the day, I fell into a repose, which can only be enjoyed when the heart is perfectly at ease. When I awoke next morning, I felt myself considerably recovered; and, when dressed, paid my mother a visit in her dressing-room. We went down stairs together, and found the earl and Lord Lesby in the parlour. Mr. Hastings did not make his appearance the whole day. This surprised and alarmed me; yet I durst not make any enquiries concerning him; being apprehensive of my brother discovering my weakness, I was cautious and reserved before him.

The absence of Hastings gave me much disquietude, as it at that
time

time afforded me striking proof of his indifference. The visions of yesterday were entirely dispelled, and I fell into my former mood of thoughts. As I seldom saw him but in my brother's presence, I was at a loss how to act. That he loved some one I was convinced; but how to come at the knowledge of the person beloved puzzled me not a little; for, from the first day of my coming down, he took no particular notice of me, but rather shunned me more than usual; which proceeding convinced me, that I was not the beloved object.

Tho' I gained strength daily, my spirits continued extremely low. My father was alarmed, and physicians were again called in,

who gave their opinions, that it was the indisposition I had lately recovered from, and ordered me to Bath to drink the waters. As the season was now advancing, preparations were immediately made for our journey.

One evening previous to our departure, as my father, Mr. Hastings, and I, were sitting together, the latter appeared extremely dull, which my father observing, turned to me and said—I believe Mr. Hastings has as much need for the Bath as you, Gertrude; for he seems to the full as low spirited. To this remark Hastings answered, that his low spirits were habitual, and it was not in the power of the Bath to remove them. He
went

went out soon after, and the earl, as was his usual custom after dinner, fell into a doze, upon which I got up, and walked into the garden. I staid there some time, and was on the point of returning to the house, when I perceived Mr. Hastings in a distant walk. His arms were folded, and he appeared lost in thought. He could not see me without turning round; I resolved to come upon him unperceived, and accordingly crossed the walks that led to him, and came quite close before he perceived me, being entirely absorbed in meditation.—Mr. Hastings, said I, what happy fair one engages your attention? He started, and turned round, and for some moments seemed at a loss what to say.

He

He at last began to stammer out something ; but I interrupted him with—Nay, Mr. Hastings, I don't want to know the lady's name, for I think I can give a pretty clear guess. I turned to go as I said this, but he eagerly caught hold of my gown—Stop a moment for heaven's sake, Lady Gertrude ! cried he ; if I have offended you, I shall be miserable to the last degree ; believe me it was unintentionally ; I meant not to have discovered my passion.—Offended me ! I exclaimed ; surely your passion for Lady Frances cannot offend me ; however, you need be under no apprehensions ; I'll not discover your secret.—For Lady Frances ! cried he ; pardon me, madam, for repeating your words ;

words; but it amazes me, that you should suspect Lady Frances for being the object of my love.— But—be it so, added he, after a pause; I can—I can still conceal my presumption. I'll endeavour—I'll strive to conquer my feelings—to resist my passion, be the task ever so hard!

He spoke these in a broken, interrupted voice, and turned from me. I was amazed at his manner, but durst not draw a conclusion from it. I felt myself grow faint, and laid my hand on the bough of a tree to support me; but, overcome by a variety of emotions, was sinking on the ground, when he turned his head, and perceiving my situation, caught me

me in his arms.—What! he exclaimed, has my folly occasioned! Ah! my adorable Lady Gertrude, your spirits are yet weak, and your pity for an unhappy man has nearly overpowered them. Do not let my sufferings affect you; I would die sooner than cause you a moment's disquietude. Pardon my indiscretion; I hoped to have concealed my presumptuous love, but I fear my actions have too clearly evinced it.

To this passionate declaration, the only answer I was capable of making was a shower of tears, which fell from my eyes in abundance, so powerfully did surprise and joy operate on me. Hastings now threw himself on his knees
at

at my feet—Good God ! cried he, to what cause am I to attribute those precious tears ? Dare I hope they flow for my sufferings ? I raised my head, and requested he would rise.—Do not, O ! do not, cried I, think light of me for this exposure of my weakness.—Oh ! most adorable of women ! exclaimed he, if the sincerest love that ever warmed the human breast, be worthy your slightest consideration, believe me, you are in full possession of it ; but do not suspect me for hoping any advantage from this disclosure of my passion ; I am too, too sensible of the disparity of our situations, and my own demerits, to expect any thing but your pity. I interrupted him, with intreating
him

him to rise; and told him, whatever my feelings were towards him, I was not at liberty to indulge them, and must request he would never again enter on the subject, as it was particularly distressing to me.—Enough, madam, cried he; your commands are sufficient; I will never urge a repetition of my offence, but by my future conduct, prove myself not unworthy your esteem. I stretched out my hand, which he raised respectfully to his lips, and then requested he would leave me. I told him I found myself much discomposed by our conversation, and wished for a little time to recover myself. He arose, on my saying this, and said, his only pleasure would be in obeying my commands,

mands, be they what they would ;
he then bowed and left me.

After his departure, I took several turns round the walks, to recover myself before I went into the house. I met my brother within a few paces of it—I was going in search of you, sister, said he ; will you take a walk ?—No, answered I ; I am quite tired, having been walking here this hour.—Then I must seek Hastings, replied he ; perhaps he may accompany me, if he is not tired also. He looked at me with meaning whilst he spoke, but I made no answer, and hurrying up the steps, proceeded immediately to my chamber. Here I had liberty to give full scope to my reflections on
what

what had passed. The pleasure I experienced, at finding myself beloved by Hastings, was considerably damped by the recollection of his circumstances. I could not suffer the idea of marrying a man without title or fortune; and it was distraction—it was madness itself, to think of giving him up for ever.

My mind continued in a state of extreme disquietude and agitation. That morning I would have given worlds, if I had them, to be convinced of his love; but, such is the caprice of the human mind, no sooner had I a certainty of it, than my pride, which had so long lain dormant, rose to perplex me. It, however, gave
me

me no small satisfaction, to find I had him at my disposal; and I went down to tea in a more tranquil state than I had experienced for some time.

LET-

LETTER X.

IN COTINUATION.

NEITHER Hastings nor Lord Lesby made their appearance that evening, which I was glad of, as I was not prepared for the scrutinizing eyes of the latter. The next day, I wrote to Lady Frances, and acquainted her, that I had questioned Mr. Hastings concerning the state of his heart: that he owned he had long had an attachment to a young lady who visited at his uncle's; but the confined state of his circumstances prevented him from paying his addresses: that, tho' he loved her

her tenderly, and had no hopes of gaining her, nothing could shake his constancy. I then advised her to give up all thoughts of him, as she might rely on it, nothing could shake the constancy of so impassioned a lover. I concluded my letter with a few condolences on the misapplication of her love, and was her sincere friend, &c.

This letter, in the fullness of my heart, I could not forbear sending her, hoping it would mortify as well as cure her of her passion. But I was mistaken in one instance; for, tho' it certainly mortified, it did not cure her; love made her clear-sighted; she penetrated my design, and suspected

pected me of gaining that heart she had long sighed for in vain. She, however, stifled her suspicions for the present, and answered my letter by return of post. She thanked me in very polite terms, for the trouble I had taken, and for my advice, which she was determined to profit by, by accepting of the Earl of T—, who had made proposals to the duke; and as he was an amiable and accomplished nobleman, she doubted not of soon being sensible of his merit. She added, that my letter came in good time to strengthen her in a resolution she had almost formed before she received it.

This letter, written in a stile so directly contrary to my expectations,

tions, greatly surpris'd me. I could not then suspect her of art, as she never deceived me, and seem'd to be naturally of an ingenuous disposition. I did not, however, give perfect credit to the contents of her letter, until some days after that, my father told me he had received one from the duke, informing him of his daughter's intended nuptials.

This account, I own, gave me some uneasiness. I was disappointed at her being so well content with the loss of Hastings, and much displeas'd at myself, for giving him reason to think he was not indifferent to me; yet I had no great reason to feel much on this account,

account, for he assumed no air on the encouragement I had given, only did not shun me so much as formerly.

LET-

LETTER XI.

IN CONTINUATION.

THINGS were in this train, when we set off for Bath. There was a vast deal of company at this place of fashionable gaiety ; amongst the rest, a Miss Saunders, whom I had been formerly acquainted with. We renewed our intimacy, and went constantly to the rooms together. One day as Lord Lesby, she, and I were walking, a gentleman passed us, who bowed to my brother.—Who is that elegant fellow ? said Miss Saunders ; I observed I caught his attention the moment we entered

the room, and he has kept his eyes fixed on me ever since ; my lord, pray tell me who he is ?—That, replied he, is the eldest son of Lord Morton ; and let me tell you, you have gained no common conquest ; for Beynon has, till now, been invulnerable to the shafts of Cupid ; but you were born to subdue all hearts, my charming Miss Saunders ! added he, looking archly in her face—shall I introduce this charming fellow ?—O ! not for the world, my lord ! I should die with confusion.—Then I shall be witness to a strange death, replied he ; besides, it will be meritorious to kill you, who have so little mercy on the male world, that you inflict death-wounds at every glance ; I shall have the thanks of both

both sexes, this favoured mortal excepted.—Pshaw, my lord, how can you be so teizing?—Oh, do not disguise that lovely face with a frown; here comes the conqueror. Provoking creature! was all she could utter, without being overheard by Beynon, who that instant advanced towards us. My brother held out his hand to him—Where have you been this age, Beynon? said he; I thought, by not hearing from you, you had taken a trip to Italy.—It was my design some months ago, replied he; but I was prevented by Lord Westbrook, who insisted on my passing the summer with him in Wiltshire. I made this my way to town, intending to stay but a few days; but I fear, added he,

looking at me, I shall not be able to quit it so soon. I threw a slight glance at Miss Saunders, and observed she reddened ; I guessed it was more from vexation at my observing her, than pleasure at what Beynon had said. My brother introduced him to both of us. He bowed to her politely, but attached himself to me during the time we staid in the rooms, which he took care should be as long as possible.

Miss Saunders's mortification at his total neglect of her, was strikingly visible. Lord Lesby enjoyed it, for he afterwards said she deserved it for her vanity, and his reason for speaking to
Beynon

Beynon at that time, was purposely to mortify her, as he was certain she was not the object that attracted him.

LETTER XII.

IN CONTINUATION.

EVERY day I went to the rooms I was sure of meeting Mr. Beynon, who took all opportunities of being near me, and soon declared himself my lover. His intimacy with my brother gave him frequent opportunities of seeing me, and he at length became a frequent visiter. From the first time Mr. Hastings saw he was of our parties, he grew reserved, and could not be prevailed on to join us. He shut himself up in his chamber with a plea of being indisposed. The earl wanted him to have advice, but he refused it, alledging

alleging it was but a slight cold and would soon go off. During the time he kept his room, I scarce ever thought of him, so much engaged was I with Mr. Beynon, and mortifying Miss. Saunders, whose partiality for him was quite visible. Lord Lesby gave Mr. Hastings most of his company while he was indisposed; and one day finding him better, prevailed on him to come down to dinner. I enquired for him in the morning, and was told he was better, but had not the smallest expectation of seeing him that day; I was surprised and much shocked at the alteration I perceived in him. His fine eyes were sunk in his head, and his whole person emaciated to such a degree, that he could be scarce known for the

lovely, blooming youth he appeared a few weeks before.

The sight of him in that condition affected me strangely, I secretly accused myself as the cause of the alteration that was visible in him. This thought struck to my heart, and awakened all my tenderness, which pride had for some time lulled. I enquired of him in a softened voice, after his health. His eyes sparkled with joy for a moment on meeting mine, but they quickly returned their former languidness. After dinner, going to retire, I requested if he was able to sit up he would favour us with his company. The rest of the family joining their intreaties to mine, he continued. In the evening

Mr.

Mr. Beynon came to see us; at his entrance Hastings turned pale, and answered his enquiries after his health in a manner quite unusual with him. Mr. Beynon paid his assiduities particularly to me that evening, but never were they or his presence more unwelcome. Mr. Hastings retired early; the rest of the company staid very late. When I went to my room, my maid delivered me a letter; I instantly broke the seal, and found it was from Hastings; the contents were as follows.

TO LADY GERTRUDE LESBY.

Madam,

TO-Morrow the man who had the presumption to tell you he

F 5

loved

loved you, will withdraw himself for ever from your presence, and the sight of those charms, that have nearly deprived him of his reason. Strong has the conflict been betwixt reason and passion. The latter, spite of my endeavours, is predominant. There is nothing left me then but absence ; for I feel I shall not be able to see you in the possession of another, without discovering emotions too strong to remain concealed. Your generous pity of my sufferings flattered me, and I hoped time would render me contented with that proof of your esteem ; but, alas ! how severely have I experienced, that pity alone was not sufficient to satisfy my presumptuous wishes. But I am adding to an involuntary fault, and trespassing on that time that
would

would be more happily employed in thinking on my rival. Pardon me, madam, but that you are not insensible of his merit is too plain to me. That he may never prove unworthy of the honour you design him, and that you may both amply experience the happiness that is for ever denied me, is the sincere wish of

Your truly devoted,

And unhappy,

EDMUND HASTINGS.

This packet is swelled to an enormous size, Frank ; Julia and I are going to dine at Darcy's ; she designs to remain here until Sally arrives, whom she has wrote to, and also to Mademoiselle Rewrelle, from whom
 she

she expects an answer shortly ; she was introduced by Miss Manly to the Darcy's, and several other families in this neighbourhood, by the name of Neville, and as a near relation of Lady Gertrude's. On my return, if it is not too late, I shall resume my pen. Adieu.

C. M.

LET-

LETTER XIII.

IN CONTINUATION.

MY emotions on reading the letter mentioned in my last, cannot be described.—And must I leave you, my amiable Hastings ! Ah, no ; it is impossible ! I cannot, must not part with you. I thought of Beynon with detestation.—Wretch ! cried I, but for him my Hastings would have been contented, nor have reduced me to this dilemma. My maid was a witness of this scene. In my confusion, on receiving the letter, I forgot to bid her leave the room. She seemed concerned at my expressions of grief, and forgetting the distance I always kept her

her at, besought me, with tears in her eyes, to be more composed. —I see, madam, said she, Mr. Hastings's letter has affected you ; you surely will not let him go in the distracted manner he is preparing to do.—Who informed you he was going ? said I.—His man, madam, answered she, told me, that when he came up this evening, he appeared like one distracted ; that he went up on being rung for, and found his master walking up and down the room in great agitation ; he stood some time at the door before Mr. Hastings took notice of him, and when he spoke, it was to know what brought him there. He told his master he was rung for. He then seemed to recollect, and desired him to come again

again in half an hour. At that time when he returned, he bid him deliver that letter, and prepare to set out for London in the morning. Dear madam, if you only saw Thomas it would move you, he is so distressed about his master.

I now saw it would be impossible to hide the matter from the wench, and therefore sat down and wrote a few lines to Hastings, requesting he would not think of leaving us, and desiring to see him in the music parlour, before any of the family were up in the morning. I gave this letter to Sally to deliver, and went to bed, but slept not; the agitation of my whole frame kept me waking. I
arose

arose in the morning as undetermined as I laid down, as to what manner I should act; for tho' there was madness in the thought of parting with Hastings, I could not then think of marrying him. However I went down stairs, and found him waiting for me. I saw by his countenance, he had not slept more than myself; I believe he observed the alteration in mine.—I fear, Lady Gertrude, said he, advancing and taking my hand, I have given you uneasiness; the letter I troubled you with, was not gone two minutes when I wished to recal it, fearing compassion would operate in my favour, and you would endeavour to prevent my departure. But I must go, madam; I am not at all times master of my passions;

sions ; they may involve you in difficulties you are not aware of—therefore do not make a request it is not in my power to comply with ; for I guess, the appointment this morning is for that purpose.—It is, I own, sir, said I, to prevent your leaving us ; and also to assure you, you are wrong in the conjecture you have formed concerning Mr. Beynon. It is true, he has honoured me with an offer of his hand ; but I have given him no reason to suppose it will be accepted. I request, therefore, you will make yourself perfectly easy on that head, for this day I will give him his final dismissal.

He gazed eagerly in my face while I was speaking, and at the
con-

conclusion, exclaimed—Generous creature ! how unworthy am I of this goodness ! then laying his hand on his forehead, he continued rapt up in thought for a few minutes ; then cried out—Why should a thought of me prevent you from rewarding the passion of a worthy man ? No, madam ; as the happiness is denied me of contributing to yours, I have no right to be the means of hindering some more worthy man. If Mr. Beynon is not happy enough to meet your approbation, you will doubtless find some other person more agreeable to you. A short absence will banish from your memory one so unworthy as I am. I go, madam ; and may you soon meet with a person—with a husband every way worthy

worthy of you. His voice was scarce audible at the conclusion of this speech; he raised my hand to his lips; I observed large drops came down his cheeks as he turned from me—I burst into a flood of tears, which I could no longer restrain. In the agitation of my soul, I cried out—Oh, Hastings! you must not, cannot leave me! If I lose you, I lose every thing that is desirable on earth! Why, why, Hastings, would you wish to render me miserable?—I wish to render you miserable! Oh, heavens! cried he, throwing himself at my feet, to make you miserable! oh, no, no! it is the wish, the fervent wish of my soul, to contribute to your happiness at the expence of my own. But, charming
ing

ing creature ! banish me from your thoughts ; for what could you expect from an unhappy wretch, destitute of fortune, friends—of every thing that could render me worthy your acceptance ! 'Tis for this I would tear myself from you, that my presence might not be an obstacle to your acting more worthy of yourself.—A truce with this humiliation, replied I, rise, and be assured, I never taste of happiness while you are miserable ; therefore, if you love me, lay aside all thoughts of leaving us ; for I feel, it is not in my power to part with you, without being at least an equal sharer in the grief it would occasion. Never was there a more quick transition from grief to joy, than this speech produced in his
fine

fine animated countenance. It is impossible to describe his raptures. I was not less happy, for I thought of nothing but him. I passed two hours with him, listening to his vows of love and constancy; the clock striking eight, warned us to separate for the present. Mr. Hastings then went to countermand the orders he had given his servant the night before, and I retired to my chamber; and as my thoughts were composed, lay down to rest:

I went down to dinner, and found the whole family assembled. In the evening, Mr. Beynon came in, as did also Miss Saunders, by invitation. I gave him no opportunity of speaking to me the whole evening, which obliged him to address

dress himself to Miss Saunders oftener than usual. She seemed highly delighted, and Hastings was no less so, as he knew it was on his account I behaved with so much coolness to his rival. My brother and Beynon spoke of a young Italian lady, who made her appearance that day in the pump-room; they both said she was extremely beautiful, as was also the lady that accompanies her, the Hon. Mrs. Herbert; but as we all knew her, she having been the reigning toast a few winters before, they confined their discourse chiefly in praise of the fair foreigner, who, they said, eclipsed every beauty in the room. There were many gentlemen regretted the absence of Lady Gertrude, said Beynon, as she

she only could vie in beauty with the fair Victoria. I bowed my head, and could not forbear smiling at the alteration his compliment to me produced in the features of Miss Saunders, who sat swelling with envy; he also observed her bridling, and turning, took her hand—Where were you to-day, my charming Miss Saunders? said he; why will you, by absenting yourself, suffer strangers to run away with the hearts of your countrymen?—If the lady be such a phoenix, answered she, colouring still higher, I shall be in no hurry to exhibit myself along with her; for I candidly own to you, it is no small mortification to me to be eclipsed, as you promise will be the fate of every one, except

cept Lady Gertrude.—Pardon me, my charmer! cried the gallant Beynon; I forgot just then, that the amiable Miss Saunders was in Bath; but to-morrow the contention of beauty will be displayed, and we shall see which of the graces will bear away the prize. She turned up her lip at this discourse, but made him no answer. I proposed going on a party next day, which was immediately agreed to.

LET-

LETTER XIV:

IN CONTINUATION.

MISS Saunders called on me the ensuing morning, agreeable to our determination the day before, and we went, attended by Hastings, Beynon, and my brother. I had no apprehensions of being rivaled by the stranger, therefore had no prepossessions against her. She was in the room before us, and was soon distinguished by the crowd that followed—such charms has a new face, that is tolerably handsome, in that gay city. She, however, deserved the praise and attention that was paid her;

for never did I see so perfect a beauty, and those that were intimate with her, gave as pleasing an account of her mental qualifications. Each time she passed, she looked particularly at our party. I wished to know who it was that attracted her attention, and the next turn discovered it was Hastings that was honoured with her notice. This gave me an uneasy sensation at first; but the recollection of his tender attachment, presently dispelled all apprehension on his account; I was rather pleased, that he made an impression on one so beautiful, as it was an additional proof of his extreme power of pleasing, and flattered my own vanity in no small degree.

When

When we were about an hour in the room, I expressed a wish to go home. Hastings flew to my side to conduct me out. My brother was behind speaking to some gentlemen; he stepped up hastily—Well, Gertrude, said he, laughing, do you give up the prize?—I never contended for it, answered I; therefore shall not regret its being bestowed on those who are worthy of it.—It is impossible envy can be an inhabitant of Lady Gertrude's breast, rejoined Hastings, as she is in full possession of all the graces.—Upon my word, Mr. Hastings, cried I, your new character becomes you exceedingly; pray how long is it since you commenced flatterer?—Do not give me a name I detest, answered

he ; it does not sit easy on me.— And what name would my dear friend have ? interrogated my brother, looking archly in his face ; I am sure, Gertrude, added he softly, you will give him any name that is pleasing to him. I frowned, and gave him a look which evinced I was displeased with him. Hastings coloured, but made no reply. Mr. Beynon attended Miss Saunders home ; my brother left us at the door, and returned to the room.

When we entered the parlour, Hastings took my hand—— I am under some apprehension of having incurred your displeasure, Lady Gertrude ; tell me, added he, tenderly looking in my face, am I so unhappy ? I gave him an
answer

answer that quickly dispelled his apprehensions on that head; for my anger was not against him, but my brother, who chose an improper time to rally me on the strength of his surmises. He was in raptures at my condescension, and ventured to hint, though very distantly, his hopes, that I would not keep him in suspense much longer. I affected not to understand him, and asked if my brother had ever hinted his suspicions of our attachment. He answered, it was his design to have asked me the same question, for he had reason to think it was no secret to him; but that he had never received from him the slightest intimation of it. I told him he was perfectly right; and desired him,

on no account, to acquaint him with any thing that passed, as I foresaw many disagreeable consequences that would arise from his being admitted to our confidence, and requested he would be more circumspect before him for the future. He promised to observe my instructions, and was going to add something more, when the appearance of Lord Lesby put a stop to our conversation. He passed the window with a countenance brimfull of intelligence, and as soon as he entered, threw himself into a chair.—I have walked myself out of breath, to acquaint you with your good fortune, Hastings, cried he; you are indisputably the luckiest fellow in England. The lovely Mrs. Herbert has

has been asking me an hundred questions concerning you; nor was her charming companion less attentive to my answers; tho' she was silent, her eyes told plainly she was interested in them. The devil take that handsome face and person of yours; there's none of us plain fellows, has the least chance of being taken notice of, when you once exhibit yourself. My good-natured brother made this long speech with a smile on his countenance.—You, however, answered I, have no reason to complain, as the ladies have honoured you with their confidence; but perhaps, added I, laughing, you have gained half this intelligence by your skill in physiognomy; for I think you said something about

speaking eyes ; and, since you are in a communicative humour, pray inform us, which of the ladies have made an impression on you, that you come home in this jealous fit, exclaiming against handsome faces? —Ay, ay, my sweet sister, replied he ; why here is railing for railing ; nay, don't say a word, continued he, starting up, and laying his hand on Hastings's mouth, Gertrude is a sufficient antagonist for me ; besides, it is your interest to be silent at present, for women discover more of their minds in one jealous moment, than in an age, when they are in no danger of losing their lovers. This speech was so little expected by Hastings and I, that it threw us both into confusion ; I attempted to speak, but

but could not. My brother looked earnestly in our faces for some time, then burst into a loud laugh—Ha! ha! cried he, will you ridicule my skill in physiognomy in future? I think your countenances at present, do clearly manifest I have not been mistaken.—

What your motive is for this extraordinary behaviour, answered I, almost bursting with rage, I am yet to learn; but desire I may no more be the object for you to exercise your wit on.—Surely, my dear Gertrude, replied he, you are not really offended; believe me, I have no motive but to contribute, as much as lies in my power, to your mutual happiness.—I have no doubt of your good will, said I; but at present you seem to mistake

the means. I quitted the room precipitately, to avoid a further explanation, as I well knew Hastings would not contradict what I asserted. I went directly to my room, in no very enviable state of mind; for the intelligence my brother had given, was by no means adapted to the raising of my spirits. I thought a woman that would publickly risk her sentiments concerning a man that was indifferent about her, would not scruple to make him an offer of her hand; and as she had a large fortune, joined to her other qualifications, which I could not help allowing were not few, he would be excuseable if he preferred her to one who had never given him hopes of obtaining her hand.

I was

I was absorbed in these reflections, when a tap at my door roused me—it was Hastings. I was surprised, as he had never taken that liberty before. He requested I would favour him with my company for a quarter of an hour in the parlour, as Lord Lesby was gone out, and he had something particular to say to me. I went down with him. When we were seated—Lord Lesby, said he, will not be persuaded, but that we are in love with each other. I endeavoured to rally him out of the supposition, but he did not seem to be convinced, and appears displeased at the distance we hold him at.—Let him think as he will, answered I; be it your care, not to give him more reasons for his suspicions

picious than he has at present, for I am resolved he shall know nothing concerning what you speak of; let it content you, I have sufficient reasons for acting in this manner.—I am perfectly acquainted, replied he, in a dissatisfied tone, with your reason; you fear I shall have too powerful an advocate in him; but be satisfied, madam; what I could not accomplish by my unabated love, and unremitting endeavours to please, I would not be obliged for to the intercession of any man living.—Indeed, said I, you make more of this matter than is necessary. What does it signify whether he is made acquainted with it or no?—Not if you would consent to bless me with your hand, without his knowledge;

ledge; for, tho' I am pretty confident he would not withhold his consent, if you think otherwise, I shall be perfectly satisfied without it.

In short, it would be tiresome to insert a conversation that lasted near two hours, and which terminated in his gaining my consent to bestow my hand on him on my arrival in town; but not without exacting a solemn promise of his never divulging our marriage, without my consent. He readily acquiesced in every thing I enjoined, and we parted then—parted with, I believe, very different sensations: he appeared all joy and rapture; I, indeed, felt some pleasure, but it was mingled with regret, at
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the thoughts of giving up my liberty to a person whom, tho' I could not help loving, I almost despised for want of title and fortune.

LET-

LETTER XV.

IN CONTINUATION.

WE staid not long in Bath after the conversation I have just related, but long enough for me to wish for a speedy removal. Mrs. Herbert sent several invitations to our house, which I refused, and consequently the rest of the family, except Lord Lesby, who was a frequent visiter of that lady, and came home every day, breathing nothing but encomiums on the charms of her fair friend. No sooner did I make known my wish of going to London to the earl, than every thing was made ready for our departure. Lord Lesby did not relish
so

so speedy a removal; but I believe he suspected my reason for wishing to quit Bath, and therefore made no objection, so ready was this kind brother to indulge my every wish. Alas! how ungrateful and undeserving was I of his indulgence. Soon after our arrival in town, Hastings claimed my promise. I was in too great apprehension of losing him (for Victorio de Lissurges ran continually in my thoughts) to keep him long in suspense.

I had determined to have no person present at the ceremony but my maid, until I recollected it would be necessary that some person should give me away, I consulted Sally on what was to be done. She told me she had a brother

ther in the city, an opulent tradesman, who was unacquainted with my person, and she would prevail on him to perform that office, by telling him I was a young woman in the same station with herself, who had made a conquest of her mistress's son. That the affair required much secrecy, on account of the young gentleman's friends having great views for him. She said she would also get him to procure a clergyman; and I had nothing to do but fix a time for the performance of the ceremony. This scheme, tho' my pride revolted at the meanness of it, as well as connecting myself with the people who were to be actors in it, was the most eligible I could think of, I wrote a note to Hastings, requesting

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ing he would meet me at eight o'clock on the Tuesday night following at Mr. Bolton's, Cheapside. I kept my room during the interval, which was but two days, under the pretence of a slight indisposition. Sally had every thing in readiness at the appointed time. She went out about an hour before me, to receive Mr. Hastings at her brother's, and ordered a chair to wait within a few doors of our house. I was entirely disguised by the hood of my cloak, and a large bonnet drawn over it. On my arrival at Mr. Bolton's, I was met at the door by Mr. Hastings and Sally; he led me into a back parlour, where the clergyman and Mr. Bolton waited to receive us. They arose at our entrance, and
the

the ceremony was immediately begun. I shook prodigiously during the performance, and when it was over, sat down, being no longer able to support myself. Seeing my situation, they prevailed on me to take a glass of wine, which in some degree restored me. Mr. Hastings took a diamond ring from his finger, which he presented to Mr. Bolton, desiring him to accept it as a small token of his gratitude, for the happiness conferred on him. The other bowed, and accepted it, but assured him it was no motive of gain induced him to act as he did, but merely to oblige his sister's friend. We then took our leave. I dispatched Sally to clear the hall of the servants at our entrance. It was a fine clear night, and we walked

walked up and down the street for a considerable time, for I had no apprehensions of being known by even our own servants, so completely was I disguised. Sally watched an opportunity of opening the door to us, and we passed into the house unperceived. Days, weeks, and months now passed over with rapidity; in Hastings I possessed the most respectful of lovers, and the tenderest of husbands. Nothing could surpass the happiness I experienced in the unrestrained society of this most amiable of men. For five months, which I reckon as the whitest moments of my existence, nothing happened to disturb our tranquility; but an uneasiness I could not help sometimes feeling for the clandestine

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tine manner of our marriage; for I now thought if I had a kingdom to bestow, it would be too little to balance his merit; and grew impatient for some favourable opportunity of disclosing our marriage to my family; but I was disappointed in my intention, by the earl making known his resolution of sending my brother immediately on his travels.

This unexpected cruel stroke quite unhinged us; for tho' we knew it must happen, we yet imagined it to be at a great distance. However there was no contending with the earl, who said he was impatient to repay Mr. Hastings the obligations we were under to him, which could not properly be done

done until his return. There was an enigma in his words, but I was too much distressed at that time to attempt to solve them. My brother seemed eager to be gone, and their departure was fixed at the period of six weeks. I had for some time discovered I was pregnant, but forbore to communicate it to Hastings; and now resolved to keep him ignorant of it, lest it should augment his uneasiness at parting. I conjured him not to discover our marriage to my brother, until he received my consent, which I assured him of, as soon as I could meet with a favourable opportunity of disclosing it to the earl and countess, tho' I resolved in my own mind, at the same time, not to mention it until his return.

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LETTER XVI.

IN CONTINUATION.

THE dreaded day too soon arrived, that was to separate me from a beloved husband and brother. My distress is not to be conceived on my bidding adieu to the former; he did not seem less moved, and returned a second time to embrace me. At that moment a fatal presentiment seized me, that I should see him no more!—the thought deprived me of my senses—I fainted away. When I recovered, I found only Sam supporting me; Mr. Hastings had torn himself from me at the first sign of returning life, and by the time

I was

I was able to distinguish objects, was no longer to be seen ; I called on him—he heard me not—I spoke to him—but no answer was made me. For three days my tears flowed unremittingly. Sally's endeavours to sooth me were ineffectual ; they could afford no relief to my distracted mind. On the fourth day I received a message from my mother, insisting on my coming down stairs, since indisposition did not detain me ; for I durst not make that excuse, lest they should have a physician called in, which would have effectually ruined me in my present state. I was, therefore, tho' unwillingly, obliged to comply, and joined them at dinner. They both gently chid me for indulging my sorrow, and

re-

requested I would not deprive them of my company, and myself of what consolation it was in their power to administer to me. I strove to appear composed before them; but that only added to the poignancy of my grief, when I was at liberty to indulge it. Time, that sure palliative of woe, at length abated, in part, the force of mine. It was now full time to think of some means of preventing my situation from being known by the family. To Sally, my only confidant, I applied for the help of her invention. We were equally at a loss for some time. I, almost despairing what to do, had half-resolved to inform my mother of my marriage and situation, when I recollected an aunt of hers, that lived in a distant part of Wales, that often

expressed a desire to see me; but I could never be prevailed on to pay her a visit, (tho' often urged by my father and mother, as she was mistress of a large fortune) as I dreaded being buried alive, she being for many years, deprived of the use of her limbs, which prevented her from going abroad, or receiving company.

No sooner did the notion strike me, than I communicated to my mother my intention of paying her a visit. She discovered some surprise at my resolution, said it was an odd whim, and bid me think no more of it. I answered, that my mind was fixed on the journey, and begged she would indulge me with her consent. She did not say

say much more against it, and that day at dinner, informed my father of my intention. He rallied with great good humour, and asked me how long I had entertained a passion for shady groves; for, I'll be sworn, Gertrude, added he, 'tis because Wales abounds with them, that you coudestend to pay your aunt a visit. I answered in the same tone, that curiosity had almost as much weight as affection; if I did not like my quarters, I would soon wing back again; but I certainly owed my aunt some gratitude for her frequent invitations, and at some period designed to accept them; the present time suited my inclinations, and, if agreeable to him, I would set out immediately.

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I met

I met with less opposition in this affair than I expected; for, tho' I was used to follow my own inclination, unopposed and uncontradicted, in every thing, I was apprehensive my father would not let me take so long a journey, when I had not my brother to accompany me.

LET-

LETTER XVII.

IN CONTINUATION.

I SET out, attended by Sally, the Tuesday following. Letters I received from Mr. Hastings and my brother, contributed to keep up my spirits during the journey, and we arrived at my aunt's without any accident. I was received with the greatest cordiality by the good old lady, who was overjoyed at seeing me, and profuse of her expressions of kindness. As soon as she would permit me out of her sight, I went over the house to make choice of an apartment. It was a large old-

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fashioned

fashioned building, with long galleries on every story, and six rooms on each floor. I made choice of one that was at a good distance from my aunt's, which joined the library. Every thing was made ready for my reception in it with the greatest dispatch. The domesticks seemed glad of employment; for, tho' that part of the house had been scarce looked at for years, at the time I withdrew I found every thing in the exactest order. The next day I sent home the carriage and servants, with letters acquainting my father how extremely pleased I was with my situation, for my aunt omitted nothing that could give me pleasure, and the garden was a perfect Eden.

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The second day after my arrival, she said she would send invitations to the neighbouring gentry. I requested she would postpone her resolution until she gave me the history of their families and connections; and added, that I did not wish she would enlarge the circle of her acquaintance on my account, for I was not fond of large parties, nor chose to mix with inferiors. My aunt was charmed with these sentiments, as she said they perfectly agreed with her own. I told her I was extremely fond of retirement, and begged she would indulge me some time in ranging about uninterrupted; when I was weary, I would solicit her to enlarge my acquaintance. She answered, that

H 4 I might

I might amuse myself in the manner most agreeable to me; I should always find her ready to gratify my wishes in every thing within her power. I grew much pleased with my aunt from her willingness to oblige me, and was under no apprehension of a discovery when I should happen to fall ill, as we never met till dinner. She had been long confined to her apartment, and could not be removed without the greatest pain. She grew extravagantly fond of me, and would not permit me to leave her from dinner until bed-time. I listened to her tales with an attentive complaisance, tho' ever so often repeated; she dwelt on none with so much pleasure, as the resemblance she bore to me in her youth.

I agreed

I agreed with her in this point, for there was a striking resemblance in our pictures; they differed in nothing but the fashion of our clothes.

As my time drew near, I was filled with the most violent apprehensions. I feared I should not recover; and lamented the folly repeatedly, which subjected me to so many inconveniences. The dreaded moment at length arrived; I was sitting after dinner, listening to the old tale of my aunt's unremitting cruelty to her lovers, when I was seized with the most violent pains. I guessed at the cause, and strove to sustain them with patience, lest she should suspect I was ill, and be troublesome

with her enquiries. Next day, before I was prepared for them, I sat three hours in the greatest agony, and then retired to my apartment, long before the usual time, complaining of an uncommon drowsiness, and saying I had not slept the night before. She admitted of the excuse, and wished me a good night. As soon as I reached my room, I flung myself on my knees, and prayed fervently to the Almighty to relieve me. I continued several hours in extreme pain, but was at length safely delivered of a daughter; I soon after fell into a sound sleep, which lasted a considerable time. Sally had provided a nurse before she left London; the woman came down about three weeks before, and had taken lodgings

lodging in a village two miles from my aunt's seat. Sally desired her not to acquaint any person with her business in that part of the country, and gave her ten guineas to ensure her secrecy.

When I awoke between five and six o'clock in the morning, I found Sally prepared to set off with the child; I kissed the dear little innocent, and shed a shower of tears over her—the parting rung my heart. Sally took her almost by force from my arms, and set forward to the nurse, to whom she gave directions to set forward instantly to town, and write to her the moment she arrived. The woman punctually observed her instructions, by leaving the place the same

same day. Sally returned before the family were stirring, and having prepared something for me, lay down to rest. She was not disturbed until late in the day, when some of the servants thinking she had slept too long, rapt at the door of her apartment. She got up, and told the servant her mistress was indisposed, and desired that no one should come into the gallery for fear of disturbing me.

At dinner, my aunt was informed of my indisposition; she sent for Sally immediately, who made light of my illness, saying it was only a slight cold. The good woman was for having advice immediately; but this Sally overruled, by declaring I never could be

be persuaded to take drugs; therefore a doctor's presence was unnecessary. My aunt then said she should be carried to my apartment, Sally had much to do to dissuade her from this resolution; assured her my illness was extremely slight, but that I kept my bed for fear of the cold encreasing. She at length gave up the point, but desired to be informed every hour how I was; this Sally promised, and hastened to me to acquaint me with those particulars. I was vexed at the proofs the good old lady was giving of her regard for me, but could not avoid admitting her visit, which she paid early next morning. I had notice of her coming, and sat up in bed to receive her, She was shocked at the alteration
of

of my appearance, and entreated me to let her send for a physician. This I strenuously refused, making use of the same arguments Sally had done the day before, and assured her my illness was much abated. She was at last prevailed on to give up the point. I requested she would not put herself to so much pain, by coming to my apartment, but to no effect; she visited me every day during my confinement, in spite of my remonstrances to the contrary.

I quitted my apartment on the twelfth day, to save my good-natured aunt from the pain it unavoidably gave her to be removed. I recovered daily, both health and spirits. Sally received a letter from the

the

the nurse, giving an account of the health of the child, which intelligence contributed to mine; and I looked forward with pleasure, to the time when I should present her to a fond father. But, alas! that day never arrived; and I cruelly deprived him and myself of the happiness of acknowledging a deserving child.

I no longer objected to my aunt's receiving company, on her urging it as necessary to dispel a lowness of spirits which usually attends sickness. There were several genteel families invited, amongst whom I spent my time as agreeably as my frame of mind would admit of. Those whom we were most intimate with, were a
Mr.

Mr. Manly and his sister. The former possessed an estate of sixteen hundred a year, and was universally beloved by all ranks of people, for his many very amiable qualities. Shortly after we became acquainted, he declared himself my lover. I soon put him out of suspense, by declaring my affections were unalterably engaged. This seemed to affect him; he begged I would honour him with a place in my esteem. That, I assured him, he was in full possession of. He thanked me, and said he would endeavour to merit a continuance of it, by never again mentioning a subject that must be disagreeable to me. He kept his word, tho' I am well assured he never altered his first senti-

sentiments concerning me. Miss Manly was a lovely amiable girl, rather of a pensive turn, which was owing to a disappointment she met with early in life. She had been contracted to a young gentleman, and the time fixed for the celebration of their nuptials, when he was seized with a violent fever, which carried him off in eight days.

Her grief was excessive for the death of her lover. Their affections having been mutual from childhood, she made a promise never to enter into the marriage state; which, tho' universally known, did not hinder her from being solicited by several men of fortune—women's vows being generally held light

light on such occasions; she, however adhered strictly to her resolution, and rejected all her suitors.

I was extremely happy in the friendship of this young lady, and passed my time very agreeably, becoming every day more pleased with my situation, when I received a letter from the earl, informing me, that my mother was taken dangerously ill. I proposed to set out immediately, being greatly afflicted at the intelligence I had received. My aunt seemed more concerned at parting with me, than for the event which occasioned it; she feared if my mother died, she should never see me again. I assured her I would visit her next year, and write constantly during

during the interval. This assurance, in some degree, consoled her; and telling me the performance of my promise was the only thing that could render my absence supportable, embraced me with affection, and bid me adieu, with eyes swimming in tears. I was much affected with her kindness, and set forward for London with a heavy heart.

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LETTER XVIII.

IN CONTINUATION.

ON my arrival in town I flew directly to my mother's apartment, and was agreeably surpris'd at finding her much better than I had reason to expect from the purport of my father's letter. After staying with her some time, I went down to the earl. He advanced with open arms to receive me.— I believe my Gertrude forgot she had a father, said he, straining me in his arms, in her apprehensions of losing her mother.—I hope the period is far distant, my lord, answered I, when I shall have reason to regret the loss of either of my parents.

parents. The countess, at present, I trust, discovers no dangerous symptoms.—I hope not, he replied; but at first her disorder seemed dangerous, and alarmed me extremely. I wrote for you instantly, and I hope, however concerned you may be for the occasion, you don't regret coming to town.—I answered on the contrary, for tho' I liked my aunt extremely, I should soon have thought of leaving her, which I was apprehensive I should find difficult to do without the present, or a similar excuse. After dinner I gave him a particular account of every thing that passed during my residence in Wales, suppressing only the grand affair which was the cause of my journey there. He seemed highly pleased with her good-

good-nature, and said he would accompany me the next time I paid her a visit; we then went up to my mother's apartment and drank tea there. She continued in an uncertain state of health for three weeks, and at the end of that time underwent such a considerable change for the worse, that the physicians despaired of her life. I was shocked and grieved at their fatal prognostication, and wept incessantly. My father endeavoured as much as was in his power to comfort me, tho' he stood in as much need of consolation himself. My mother slept continually for two days; on the morning of the third she desired me to send down to the earl. He came, and we both kneeled by her bedside, she took leave

leave of us both in a most pathetic manner, and then begged of us to retire. I entreated leave to stay, but she pointed to the earl, signifying that he required my attendance. We left the room, and in about half an hour word was brought that she was departed. 'Twas then I stood in need of fortitude, not only to bear up against my own sorrow, but to support the spirits of my father, whose grief knew no bounds. Whilst there was the least glimmering, he stifled his emotions, but when there was no fear of disturbing his beloved partner with his complaints, they broke out with redoubled violence. Some days after her interment I persuaded him to accompany me to Windsor, as I hoped the change of scene would

would divert his thoughts from what they constantly dwelt on. The first violence of his grief abated by degrees and then gave place to a settled melancholy, which never after quitted him. We received letters from my brother and Mr. Hastings, in answer to those that gave an account of my mother's death, they were then preparing to set off for Italy.

We returned to town immediately after the receipt of those letters, and soon after set off for my father's seat in Devonshire, where we usually passed the summer. Before I left town, Sally brought my little Julia to me. I had never seen her since the morning she had been delivered to the nurse; she was then

near

near eight months old, and the perfect resemblance she bore to my dear Hastings endeared her, if possible, still more to me. I would have been happy to have taken her with me, but that was impossible without risking a discovery, which, at that time, would have been highly improper.

LETTER XIX.

IN COTINUATION.

ON our arrival at my father's seat, we received a vast number of visitors, more indeed than we had been used to ; but I thought company the only restorative that could contribute to my father's recovery from a melancholy that seemed to weigh down his existence. Mr. Beynon, after our return from Bath, came often to our house whilst my brother was there ; he was received as a friend to the family ; he called many times after my return from Wales, but my mother's indisposition prevented me from

from seeing him. My father at this time received a letter from Lord Morton, containing a proposal of marriage between his son and me. He shewed me the letter, and asked me what answer he should send his lordship.—I requested he would not urge me to accept of the addresses of Mr. Beynon ; that he was by no means agreeable to me, and I never could give him my hand.—I will put no constraint on your inclination, answered he, but expect you will make known your objections to him. He seemed to be a favourite of your's in Bath, what has he done since to forfeit your good opinion ? —I replied, nothing ; that he always possessed my good opinion, but nothing more. I could never look on him in any view but as a

friend, nor ever gave him reason to think I would, and requested he would write such an answer to Lord Morton as would rid me of all further importunities.—You seem determined, Gertrude, said my father; but tho' I do not insist on your accepting Mr. Beynon, I am by no means satisfied with your manner of refusing him, and imagine you have other reasons for rejecting him than those you have explained to me. I felt the truth of this accusation, and was exceedingly confused, but, forcing a smile, told him, I had given my true reason, which was that I never did nor ever could like him for a husband. He made no answer to this, but shook his head with a dissatisfied air, and retired to answer Lord Morton's letter.

letter. He took no more notice of this affair to me, which saved me a deal of embarrassment, as I had no way of extricating myself should he question me, but by uttering falsehoods that were repugnant to my nature, and what I never would descend to, could I possibly avoid it. Lady Frances F. with whom I had not been intimate since her marriage, which took place immediately after the letter she wrote me, signifying her intention of accepting the Earl of F. at this period surprised me with a letter, complaining of my long neglect of her; she added, she would be in town in January, and hoped I would renew an intimacy which formerly gave her much pleasure. I answered her letter immediately; declared

I was wholly at a loss how to account for the long silence that subsisted between us, that a renewal of her friendship would contribute as much to my happiness as it could possibly do to her's; that my father and I intended to be in town the same month she mentioned, and I should be happy to see her on my arrival. These letters were equally sincere, as will be seen hereafter.

Nothing remarkable happened between that time and our arrival in town. I received a card from Lady Frances the day after I arrived, containing an invitation to dinner the Thursday following. She received me with open arms, and regretted, with seeming sorrow, the long time
we

we were estranged from each other. After dinner she ordered the children to be brought in; the eldest was a sweet little girl of three years old. I embraced the child, and could not help sighing deeply at the recollection of the circumstance which prevented me from acknowledging myself a mother. I had by this time lost some of that intolerable pride which was the cause of all my future misery; but alas! not enough to declare my situation, which if I had done at that time, would have prevented many of the evils I have since experienced. I asked Lady Frances if she had entirely forgot her friend Hastings, as I thought it strange she never enquired after him.—She answered she had not; that he corresponded

with the duke her father, and by that means heard of him often.—I owe you many thanks, Lady Gertrude, continued she, for the advice you were so kind as to send me concerning him; for by the accounts I have since heard, he is of a very fickle disposition, and consequently not calculated to make any woman happy.—I answered, that I had never heard of his liking any woman, but the young lady I wrote to her about, that he had seen at his uncle's.—Oh! said she, I believe you are quite unacquainted with his manoeuvres; have you not heard of an Italian lady, who came over on a visit to Mrs. Herbert?—I saw the lady you speak of in Bath, answered I; Hastings was at that time confined with sickness;

ness; and, I am convinced, never saw her, but once that he went to the rooms with me after his recovery.—Bless me! said she, you must have been greatly deceived. Was it not at his desire, that Lord Lesby set out so early on his travels?—I answered, no; it was the will of the earl.—You may think so, said she; but it was Hastings contrived it with your brother; and it was at their mutual desire, the earl sent them abroad so soon. I am surprised you can be so ignorant of circumstances that were known to the whole town, that his design was to pay his addresses to Victoria de Lissurges, who had given him so much encouragement during her stay in Bath.—It is, indeed, surprising, replied I, that I

should be ignorant of these circumstances, if they really existed ; but as this is the first I have ever heard of them, you must excuse me, if I suspect you have been misinformed.—One of us, my dear Gertrude, answered she, smiling, is certainly ; but it matters not which, as the affair don't nearly concern either of us. She then changed the discourse with an easy indifference, as tho' she had been talking of a matter of no consequence. But this conversation had a quite different effect upon me ; I felt my head grow light, and it was with the greatest struggle and exertion of my spirits, I kept from fainting.—Lady Frances did not seem to take notice of the disorder her discourse threw me into ;
and,

and, by her inattention, gave me time to collect my scattered senses.

As the conversation became general, I endeavoured to keep up a part in it; but a person with a small share of penetration might easily discover the agitation of my mind.

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LETTER XX:

IN CONTINUATION.

I TOOK my leave early, and when I got home, related to Sally her ladyship's conversation. She gave no credit to any thing Lady Frances asserted, and endeavoured to erase from my mind, the impression her discourse had made upon it; but in vain, it had sunk too deep. I gave way to the most violent emotions of grief; and in the bitterness of my heart, reviled Hastings, myself, and the poor little innocent I brought into the world. In this manner I passed the night. Sally sat weeping by until I became more calm; she then

then represented, that Lady Frances invented that tale purposely to make me uneasy, as she might by some means have come to the knowledge of my rivaling her, and took that method of being revenged. I listened with eagerness while she was speaking, and for a moment, a gleam of consolation floated across my mind; but it was quickly dispelled, by recollecting her ladyship's manner, and that the circumstances were known to the whole town. Thus confirmed, I charged Sally never to open her lips in his justification. She durst not disobey, and I, for some time, indulged the most gloomy reflections, without interruption.

In

In about a fortnight after this, I received a packet of letters from Mr. Hastings and my brother. The former I committed to the flames, without reading; those from my brother, almost confirmed the cruel news that had destroyed my peace. He described the Lifsurges family as extremely amiable; said that Hastings and he were then there on a visit; that the former was so great a favourite with the old baron, that he believed he designed to bestow Victorio on him. He added, that he once hoped to have seen his merit distinguished at home; but you, Gertrude, disappointed me in what was the first wish of my heart; for nothing could give me
equal

equal satisfaction to calling him brother.

I was roused from reading this letter, by a confused noise below stairs. I sent Sally to know the cause, who returned instantly, exclaiming—My lady, the earl is dying. I flew down stairs, and found my father, supported by several of the servants, just recovering from a fainting fit.—Good God! cried I, what's the occasion of this disorder? My father pointed to a letter that lay on the ground. I took it up, but perceiving Hastings's hand, flung it from me involuntarily. You see the fatal cause, said my father, wringing his hands—Oh, my ill-fated son! I needed not this stroke to send me quickly

quickly to my grave. Ah ! what is it I hear ? cried I, snatching up the letter, what other misfortune has fate in store for me ! I lost the recollection of my wrongs in my fears for my brother ; but had not read four lines, when I fell senseless on the floor. When I recovered, I found myself in my own room ; Sally weeping bitterly by my side. What is the meaning of all this grief, said I ?—Did I not receive a letter ?—Do the contents of it make you weep ?—Be composed, good girl ; you cannot feel as I do, and behold I shed not a tear. She made no answer, but sobbed, as tho' her heart was breaking. I paused for a few seconds, when the latter scene flashing upon me, I gave a violent shriek, and
sprung

sprung up—O, my father! I exclaimed, have I lost you too? and advanced towards the door. Sally caught hold of me—For heaven's sake, my lady, she cried, forbear; nor attempt going down in your present frame of mind. The earl is very ill; do not add to his affliction, by appearing before him in this disorder. Full, full enough is his cup of affliction!—Full, indeed, cried I, bursting into tears; but surely mine is run over.—Father! husband! brother! are all lost to me! Oh, horror! misery! distraction!—Ah! madam, cried Sally, do not give way to these violent emotions; but thank heaven that your father and husband still live; the latter, I hope, to clear himself from a false imputation.

tation. The earl is lain down to rest ; he prevailed on, dear lady, to do the same, that when he awakes, you may be fit to offer consolation, instead of augmenting his distress. —Never more, cried I, shall I know rest ; but as my father is retired, I shall not disturb him. Where is that fatal letter, that has occasioned this disorder ? —Surely, my lady, you would not attempt to read it now ? —Why not ? Is not my brother, my dear brother dead ? Does it contain more cruel news ? If it does, what time so fit as the present ? My heart's already fully charged ; another woe will burst it : thus my misery will end at once ! A violent gush of tears, which accompanied these words, gave a small degree of ease to my afflicted soul.

LET-

LETTER XXI.

IN CONTINUATION.

WHEN I became somewhat composed, I read the letter—it was from Hastings. He said there was a large party of ladies and gentlemen invited to pass a few weeks at the Baron de Lif-furges's country seat; amongst whom were Lord Lesby and him. A few days after their arrival, as some of the company were walking in the garden, they were alarmed by several shrieks, in a female voice. Lord Lesby was at a good distance from the rest of the company, and next the door that led

led to the road; he quitted the arm of the lady he was supporting in the walk, and flew like lightning, to the place from whence the noise proceeded. When the rest of the company came to the garden door, they saw him about forty yards from them, engaged in discourse with two gentlemen; they were talking earnestly together; a chaise and a young lady stood a few paces from them. Some of the gentlemen were walking leisurely up to them, when, in the twinkling of an eye, my brother and one of the men had their swords drawn, and made furious passes at each other. All the company flew towards the place when they saw this, but not time enough to prevent the fatal consequence; for

for Lord Lesby had received a mortal wound in the side, and fell just as one of the gentlemen came up.

Hastings was not a witness of this scene, having staid to read by Victoria, who had been prevented from accompanying them by a slight indisposition. Some of the servants flew into the house, exclaiming—Lord Lesby was killed. On this Hastings threw down the book, and proceeded hastily into the garden; but before he reached the gate, a party of the gentlemen entered, bearing Lord Lesby in their arms. The sight almost deprived him of his reason. He flew to his friend, who held out his hand, and exclaimed—Oh, Hastings!

Hastings! how vain all human pursuits! one short half hour what a change!—He was conveyed to the house, and physicians immediately sent for; who, on the first look, pronounced his wound mortal. Too true they prognosticated, for he expired next morning.

The unhappy cause of this rencontre was a young lady of fortune, who lived about a quarter of a mile from De Liffurges's, and was coming unattended to pay a visit, when she was seized by two gentlemen, who insisted on her going into the chaise. She refused; and, on their attempting to force her, she shrieked, which brought my brother to her deliverance, who soon fell a victim to his humanity. The lady
was

was also brought to the house, and on her recovery from a succession of fainting fits, being informed of Lord Lesby's situation, was seized with a fever and delirium, and was, at that time, in imminent danger. Hastings concluded with saying, "He knew not how to return to England;" but exhorted the earl to a patient submission to the divine will. Oh! what anguish did I experience on this sad occasion! but words are too weak to describe my woes. How bitterly did I experience the truth of a line of Shakespeare,

Woes come not singly, but in full battalions.

My father was seized with a violent fever, the result of the conflict his mind laboured under. I attended

attended him constantly, and lost, in part, the remembrance of my sorrows, by my unwearied attendance on him; which proves, I think, that the present ill obliterates, for a time, the memory of the former ones.

He continued ill a fortnight, before the physicians could give their certain opinion of him; they then pronounced him past recovery. He sent for Mr. Pultney, his lawyer, and made his will. He bequeathed two thousand a year to Hastings, and several legacies to different people; the estate and eighty thousand pounds devolved to me. When the business of the will was over, he sent for me. I instantly obeyed the summons.—

I have

I have requested your presence, my dear Gertrude, said he, to take my last farewell of you in this world. I am hurrying fast to a better. You have had severe trials, my dear child ; arm your mind with fortitude, and bear this last stroke with firmness. Had it pleased God to permit your brother to return in safety, I would have seen you disposed of to my satisfaction ; but heaven has thought fit to thwart my purposes, by snatching my son before me. I recommend Hastings to you as a worthy man, but lay no restraint on your inclinations. Thus touching the strings of my sorrows, I felt an unusual oppression at my heart ; I strove to stifle my sobs and tears, but now they burst forth in spite

of my endeavours to suppress them.
—Dry up your tears, Gertrude, said he, and rejoice that he who gave you being, and one so dear to you, is going to be released from this world of misery. I might have lingered out a few years longer, but for this sad stroke; they would have appeared tedious to me, for no happiness have I known since I lost your amiable mother. I shall presently join her in the kingdom of blessed spirits, where we shall never more be separated. Here his voice grew weak; he breathed with difficulty; I rung for assistance, but before any one entered he expired. I fainted over him, and on my recovery was led out by my attendants. I was so injured to affliction, by the time
this

this event happened, that I was far less affected at it than I should have been a few months before.

My first thoughts when I began to give way to reflection, were, in what manner I should dispose of my daughter; for I was resolved to rid myself of every object that would remind me of her father. I sent to Mr. Pultney, and ordered a settlement to be drawn of four hundred a year, which I presented Sally with, and desired her to prepare to set off for France, whither I designed to send her and Julia, who was then upwards of two years old. She seemed surprised, and intreated in the strongest terms, that I would not banish my child. She said, if I

was determined to part with her, she must submit; but begged I would consider I was a parent, and not act so unnaturally.

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LETTER XXII.

IN CONTINUATION.

THE arguments that Sally used were all in-vain ; I was not to be moved by them ; and was at length so angry, that she, fearing to irritate me, forbore to say any more, but silently prepared to obey me.

When every thing was ready for ther departure, she asked me if I would not see Julia. I refused, fearing the sight of her would shake my resolution ; desired her to lodge in a private family until Julia was six years old, and then go to a convent some distance from Paris,

and on no account to discover to whom she was indebted for her birth : that on her secrecy in this last injunction depended her subsistence ; for if she ever claimed me as a parent, that instant would I deprive her of a settlement she should for life enjoy, by complying with my desire. She promised to perform punctually what I enjoined her ; and hinted, that I had no right to suspect her secrecy. I felt the reproach, and gave her a fifty pound note, as a compensation for the severity, or injustice of my suspicions. We then parted with mutual grief. She wept bitterly, and prayed for my happiness ; said she hoped soon to be recalled to be witness to a happy reconciliation. I embraced and bid her adieu, and then

then retired to my room, where each sad scene that had passed during the last three years presented itself to my imagination. It was amazement all! how rapidly had one disagreeable event succeeded the other, and how surprising that I did not sink under the weight of such heavy afflictions. I gave Mr. Pultney a direction to Mr. Hastings, and requested he would acquaint him with my father's death, and of the legacy he bequeathed him. I told Mr. Pultney I was going into Wales, and would keep up no correspondence with any person in London but him; and requested when Mr. Hastings came to England, he would not inform him where I was, as I could not support the sight of a person who

left it with my deat brother; and also to forward any letters to me that came to his hand.

Every thing being thus settled, I set off for my aunt's, resolving to finish my days there; but fate had otherwise decreed for me. I had not then performed above half my part on the great stage; it was decreed I should have many other trying scenes to act.

LETTER XXIII.

IN CONTINUATION.

I WAS received by my aunt, as I expected, with the strongest expressions of joy. I took my old apartments, which were greatly improved; my aunt imagining I would perform my promise, had got them painted, and several improvements made thro' the house in my absence. Here I passed my time in as gloomy a manner as I could wish. There was, as Calista expresses it,

Room for meditation, even to madness.

Some time after my arrival, I received a letter from Mr. Pultney,

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acquainting me, that he had received one from Mr. Hastings, wherein he informed him of his intention of coming to England; he also inclosed two others that my servant had left at his house to be forwarded to me. One was from Mr. Hastings, which met the fate of the preceding ones. Perhaps, thought I, if he is not already married to Victoria, tho' he despises me as daughter to the earl of M—, he may think the heiress of his estate worthy of his attention, and be tempted to play his favourite mistress false. I anticipated with pleasure, the mortification it would give him, to be refused admittance when he arrived; for I was firmly resolved not to see him.

I had

I had not long to wait for an opportunity of putting my resolution in practice, for he arrived in England three weeks after I received Mr. Pultney's letter. I had this news by another epistle from that gentleman, who also informed me of Mr. Hastings's intention of coming into Wales ; but assured me on his honour, he was not informed of the place of my residence by him. I had now to prepare my aunt for his reception, which I did by warning her not to be deceived by his specious appearance ; assured her his interior was a direct contradiction to his exterior, he being the most deceitful of men ; and I had reason to think, it was by following his lead my brother was deprived of his life.

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This was sufficient to prejudice the old lady against him, be his appearance ever so interesting. About four days afterwards I was at Mr. Manly's ; as I stood up after dinner, I saw the servant that went abroad with Hastings and my brother, ride by in full gallop. Good God ! what were my emotions ; I gave a violent scream, and fainted. The company were much surprised at this event, and eagerly enquired, when I recovered, what had frightened me. I evaded this question, by saying I was subject to faintings ; and, as I found myself unfit for company, requested to go home. After a few intreaties, I was permitted. Mr. Manly would not permit me to go alone, and insisted on accompanying me. I made

made no objection; and after he saw me into the house, he returned. I went directly to my aunt's room. She was alarmed at my entrance, as the paleness which overspread my face shocked her. She enquired, eagerly, what was the matter. I told her I had been taken ill, but was then perfectly recovered, and begged of her not to be alarmed. After some anxious enquiries concerning the nature of my illness, she proceeded to inform me of Mr. Hastings's visit. I had need of all my prejudice, said she, to prevent my being interested in his favour. He first enquired for you, and, on being told you were from home, sent to request a few moments conversation with me. On his being shewn into my room,
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he apologized for the liberty he had taken ; informed me who he was, and said he had unhappily, he knew not how, offended Lady Gertrude ; requested I would intercede with you to grant him an interview, when he hoped to convince you, that whatever prejudice you had conceived against him was without cause. He declared also, that if he was not successful in his application, he would bid a final adieu to his native country, and you should no more be troubled with his presence or intreaties. I told him, continued she, that your positive orders were, he should not be admitted, but, if on your return I could prevail on you to see him, he should receive a card next morning, to request his presence.

He

He returned me thanks in the most polite terms, and took his leave. Upon my word, niece, added she, I think you extremely wrong in refusing to hear what he has to say in his justification. Tho' I am not acquainted with the nature of his offence, I imagine it not to be so heinous as to deserve being totally excluded from a right of having his defence listened to.—I see, madam, said I, he has had art enough to impose on you. He is such an adept in dissimulation, that he might deceive even me, could I be persuaded to listen to him, tho' I have had sufficient proofs of his unworthiness. It is for this reason I refuse seeing him, lest I should not be proof against his too prevailing eloquence.—

Well,

Well, child, replied my aunt, - I seek not to know your reason for this seeming severity ; I have performed my promise, and now leave you to act as you think proper. — Then I will not keep him in suspense till to-morrow, answered I, but inform him now your intreaties were fruitless ; for nothing on earth shall shake the resolution I have formed, never to see him more. Having declared this, I instantly dispatched a note to the same purpose to the inn. The servant told me on his return, that the gentleman mounted his horse immediately, and set forward for London.

LET-

LETTER XXIV.

IN CONTINUATION.

I EXPERIENCED none of the pleasures I expected to feel at his mortification. My mind was in continual agitation; and, tho' I refused to see him with so much haughtiness, I felt an additional weight on my spirits when I heard he was gone. But alas! how trivial were all my sufferings, compared to the pangs I experienced on a confirmation of his departure for ever, which I received in a letter from Mr. Pultney a fortnight after. The description is too much for my brain—it almost bursts with the recollection.—It was

was now, for the first time, since the intelligence I received from Lady Frances, that I thought it possible he might be innocent. I called to mind his former tenderness—his letter at the time I received this cruel intelligence, breathed nothing else—his behaviour at my aunt's—his mildness and submission, all together rushed upon me, and nearly drove me to distraction. I execrated myself for my cruelty to the most amiable of men; for in that light I now considered him, and condemned myself for wantonly destroying his letters, which might have contained proofs of his innocence.

Wretch! wretch! I exclaimed, thou doomed thyself to perpetual

petual misery ; he is now gone to make happy an amiable woman, who deserves that tenderness he would have lavished on thee, but for thy unconquerable obstinacy, which dashed from thy hand the cup of happiness which was offered to thy acceptance ! In this manner did I rave perpetually ; nor would admit of consolation.

I passed two years in all the extravagance of grief, without one ray of comfort. Mr. and Miss Manly, the only people whose conversation gave me satisfaction, were during that time, totally excluded. I saw not a face, except my aunt's, and the servants that attended table. My aunt was intirely confined to her bed, she be-
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ing exceeding old, and not able to bear a removal; therefore was ill calculated for a comforter, herself standing in as much need of one, from the pain of her body, as I did from the agitation of my mind. She, however, intreated me with so much earnestness one day, to send an invitation to Miss Manly, but without a hope of its being accepted, by reason of my long neglect of her. But how much was I deceived in my opinion of this amiable girl.—She flew on the wings of friendship, and was in my apartments. I thought the servant had not time to get to her house.—I have obeyed your summons, dear Gertrude, said she, embracing me, the moment I received it; tell me, my dear, the
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the reason of this long seclusion from your friends; I impatiently long to be made acquainted with your griefs; and believe me, you have not one I will not participate in, if not alleviate.

I burst into tears at these expressions of kindness. It was long since I had heard the soothing voice of friendship.—You shall know all, my dear Emily, said I, returning her embrace; but I fear the recital will rob me of your esteem. When you are acquainted with my follies and inconsistencies, you'll no longer think me worthy of your friendship.—Ah! forbear to harbour such a suspicion, she replied, but unbosom your griefs freely; it will give ease to
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your heart, which I see is overcharged with anguish. She endeavoured to sooth me in the kindest terms; nor were her friendly intentions unsuccessful. I collected my spirits in the best manner I could, in order to comply with her intreaties, and related every thing particular that passed from the time Mr. Hastings was introduced into our family. She was amazed at some parts of my story, but particularly at the private and unaccountable manner of my marriage, and told me so, but in the most gentle and friendly terms.—I answered, that I was ashamed of marrying a person I then thought so much beneath me; but that I soon altered my opinion, and longed impatiently for his return to England,

England, when it would have been my highest pride to acknowledge him for my husband. Such, I told her, were my sentiments, when I received the cruel intelligence from Lady Frances, which unhinged my very soul. I thought he wished to cancel the engagement between us, which he could readily do, on account of the very private manner it was conducted in, that he took advantage of my pride, which he knew would not suffer me to claim a person who no longer thought me worthy of his attention. This thought took possession of me, and drove every favourable sentiment I entertained of him from my mind.

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It was not until he bid a final adieu to England I thought it possible I might be deceived, and condemned myself for burning his letters, and refusing to see him when he begged so earnestly for an interview.

I cannot wholly excuse you, answered she; you acted treacherously by Lady Frances; and it is from that circumstance you may date the misfortunes you have since experienced. She being mistress of more cunning than you were aware of, saw into the design of your letter, and, by acquainting herself with your transactions, took a proper opportunity of being revenged. You cannot now recal what is past; therefore throw aside this unavailing

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ing melancholy; return to the world, and do not give her leave to enjoy her triumph: Hastings may yet be recalled.—Oh, never! never! I exclaimed, interrupting her; I will never sue to be reconciled to him; he must, he does despise me; I have rendered myself unworthy of his love by my unjust suspicions, and would retire to the farthest part of the earth, sooner than meet his reproaches.—I don't think you have much reason to apprehend them, she replied; but we'll discuss that point another time. What I advise at present is, that you go immediately to London, and, by your behaviour, convince Lady Frances she has missed her aim in mortifying you. I objected to leaving my aunt in her

present state of health. She answered, that a few months would be sufficient for me to continue in town, and it was necessary for me to partake of some of the amusements it afforded, to dispel, if possible, part of that melancholy which had taken such entire possession of me. She made use of so many arguments, that I at length consented, provided she would accompany me, to which she readily agreed.

End of the First Volume.